

POPANILLA
and OTHER TALES

by
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BENJAMIN DISRAELI

With an Introduction

by

PHILIP GUEDALLA

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A NOTE ON THE TALES

The young Disraeli was sparing of the shorter forms of composition. Even his verse ran to the epic, and, politics apart, he lispd in novels. So as the novels succeeded one another at a respectable rate, his shorter pieces were infrequent. The earliest of those assembled in this volume is A True Story, first published by Leigh Hunt in his Indicator on July 12, 1820. But though its author signed it with his enigmatic Δ, it bore few other traces of its origin; and since he was fifteen, its sole interest is that of a 'collector's piece'. Popanilla, first issued in 1827 as The Voyage of Captain Popanilla, was more substantial. Deriving from his early satire on the adventures of Aylmer Papillon in Vraibleusia, it rose like a phoenix from the ashes of that perished manuscript and soared above the English scene. Opening in the Adamite felicity of a non-existent island, it poked delicious fun at the new solemnities of the Economists. But its hero soon transferred himself to an island more familiar to his readers, and the rest of his adventures were passed in 'the railroad state of Vraibleusia' and Hubbabub, its monstrous capital. England in 1827 was deftly evoked its Debt, its currency question, and the vague impending figure of British agriculture. From time to time the Economists were elegantly pricked; 'the Great Shell Question' was gaily expounded for the confusion of all currency experts, and 'THE ABORIGINAL INHABITANT' was described in terms highly unbecoming in a future leader of the County Party but satirists, who enter politics, run dreadful risks. Then, growing more detailed, he portrayed with admirable derision the sweeping gestures of Mr. Canning's foreign policy, the contradictions that followed Navarino (with Admiral Codrington as Sir Bombastes

Furioso), and the triumphant return to office, only a few months before the little book appeared, of the Centaur Chiron with the political manners of the Duke of Wellington. But his choicest shafts were reserved for the preposterous vogue of Colonies, a circumstance that greatly endeared the work to Mr Bright, of Rochdale, who could savour its gay scorn for 'Sydney, or Port Jackson, or Guelph City, or Goodrich Town.'

In the next year the readers of Bulwer's New Monthly were regaled with an inimitable blend of gaiety and Lemprière entitled *Ixion in Heaven*. Its scheme, perhaps, and something of its tone were owed to Lucian. But a more modern touch intruded a Byronic Apollo and a Jove whose figure and coiffure recalled King George IV. A year later he returned to the same genre in *The Infernal Marriage*. But this time his mythology was strongly tinged with mortal affairs, although the topical element is largely to be found in the later portions, which the author added in 1834 after a delirious London season with Count D'Orsay and Lady Blessington. The infernal Chancellor bore a strong likeness to Lord Brougham, and who could fail to see Talleyrand and Madame de Dino in the sage Tiresias with his diplomacy and his slightly equivocal attendant? The deities had even been reading *Ixion*, and expressed divine opinions of the author and his 'talent for the extravagant.' The Great War was now the Trojan War; the exiled Saturn had a look of Charles X. at Holyrood, with his anecdotes of the ancien régime, while triumphant Jupiter, his perfidious and usurping relative, disclosed King Louis Philippe with an 'Olympian juste milieu.' The Titans, by a shift of the kaleidoscope, were all Tories, 'a subverted Faction' destroyed by the admission of the Olympians to power by Reform. Enceladus, their leader, mirrored the Duke himself, hook nose and all; and old Oceanus, 'seated by the margin of the pool, and weeping with the crocodiles,' was surely the easily prostrated Goderich. Hyperion was a graceful compliment to Peel, and the mocking Rhætus with his project for a pasquinade was young Disraeli,

a Tory now, secure among the Titans. For his Elysium the author went to London once again London in 1834, with echoes of D'Orsay and his Blessington It was a gay farrago ; and the dancing prose seems to move brightly among the gods and goddesses to an air of Offenbach.

A year before, early in 1832, he spent a week at Bath with Bulwer. 'The pair were positively mobbed at a public ball ; but they preferred the solitary delights of talk and Latakia Between the puffs he dashed off a heady novelette of sherbet, scimitars, and Christian dogs upon the heroic adventures of Scanderbeg. The Rise of Iskander, which he published in 1833 with Alroy, was a slightly fevered reminiscence of his trip to Albania two years before. Murad and Hunyadi strode the boards as Amurath and Hunniades , there was an almost uninterrupted clash of arms ; and the whole, with its triumph of the Cross, composed a romantic inversion of his later theme of 'Peace with Honour.' The flow of novels was momentarily checked. Politics began to absorb him. But Heath's Book of Beauty for 1835 contained a brief romance of chivalry ' by the Author of " Vivian Grey." ' The Carrier-Pigeon, with which he obliged the gifted editor, Lady Blessington, illustrated sufficiently a peculiarly insipid drawing of Machse, and is notable for a hero named Lothair. In the next year his kindness (though little else) was demonstrated by the contribution of The Consul's Daughter, who loved her author's favourite name of Ferrers , whilst Walstein, in his philosophic vein, contained faint echoes of his German travels and threw on the screen a shadow of himself as the despairing, brilliant, migratory Sidonia His poverty of proper names was always odd. Did not later years reduce him to impersonate a minor character from Vivian Grey ' a man who does not say much,' named Lord Beaconsfield ?

PHILIP GUEDALLA.

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POPANILLA

ADVERTISEMENT

This narrative of an imaginary voyage was first
published in 1827.

POPANILLA

Chapter I

THERE is an island in the Indian Ocean, so unfortunate as not yet to have been visited either by Discovery Ships or Missionary Societies. It is a place where all those things are constantly found which men most desire to see, and with the sight of which they are seldom favoured. It abounds in flowers, and fruit, and sunshine. Lofty mountains, covered with green and mighty forests, except where the red rocks catch the fierce beams of the blazing sun, bowery valleys, broad lakes, gigantic trees, and gushing rivers bursting from rocky gorges, are crowned with a purple and ever cloudless sky. Summer, in its most unctuous state and most mellow majesty, is here perpetual. So intense and overpowering, in the daytime, is the rich union of heat and perfume, that living animal or creature is never visible, and were you and I to pluck, before sunset, the huge fruit from yonder teeming tree, we might fancy ourselves for the moment the future sinners of another Eden. Yet a solitude it is not.

The island is surrounded by a calm and blue lagoon, formed by a ridge of coral rocks, which break the swell of the ocean, and prevent the noxious spray from banishing the rich shrubs which grow even to the water's edge. It

is a few minutes before sunset, that the first intimation of animal existence in this seeming solitude is given, by the appearance of mermaids ; who, floating on the rosy sea, congregate about these rocks. They sound a loud but melodious chorus from their sea-shells, and a faint and distant chorus soon answers from the island. The mermaidens immediately repeat their salutations, and are greeted with a nearer and a louder answer. As the red and rayless sun drops into the glowing waters, the choruses simultaneously join, and rushing from the woods, and down the mountain steeps to the nearest shore, crowds of human beings, at the same moment, appear and collect.

The inhabitants of this island, in form and face, do not misbecome the clime and the country. With the vivacity of a Faun, the men combine the strength of a Hercules and the beauty of an Adonis, and, as their most interesting companions flash upon his presence, the least classical of poets might be excused for imagining that, like their blessed Goddess, the women had magically sprung from the brilliant foam of that ocean which is gradually subsiding before them.

But sunset in this land is not the signal merely for the evidence of human existence. At the moment that the Islanders, crowned with flowers, and waving goblets and garlands, burst from their retreats, upon each mountain peak a lion starts forward, stretches his proud tail, and, bellowing to the sun, scours back exulting to his forest ; immense bodies, which before would have been mistaken for the trunks of trees, now move into life, and serpents, untwining their green and glittering folds, and slowly bending their crested heads around, seem proudly conscious of a voluptuous existence, troops of monkeys leap from tree to tree, panthers start forward, and alarmed, not alarming, instantly vanish, a herd of milk-white elephants tramples over the back-ground of the scene, and instead of gloomy owls and noxious beetles, to hail the long-

enduring twilight, from the bell of every opening flower beautiful birds, radiant with every rainbow tint, rush with a long and living melody into the cool air

The twilight in this island is not that transient moment of unearthly bliss, which, in our less favoured regions, always leaves us so thoughtful and so sad ; on the contrary, it lasts many hours, and consequently the Islanders are neither moody nor sorrowful. As they sleep during the day, four or five hours of ' tipsy dance and revelry ' are exercise and not fatigue. At length, even in this delightful region, the rosy tint fades into purple, and the purple into blue, the white moon gleams, and at length glitters, and the invisible stars first creep into light, and then blaze into radiancy. But no hateful dews discolour their loveliness, and so clear is the air, that instead of the false appearance of a studded vault, the celestial bodies may be seen floating in æther, at various distances and of various tints. Ere the showery fire-flies have ceased to shine, and the blue lights to play about the tremulous horizon, amid the voices of a thousand birds, the dancers solace themselves with the rarest fruits, the most delicate fish, and the most delicious wines, but flesh they love not. They are an innocent and a happy, though a voluptuous and ignorant race. They have no manufactures, no commerce, no agriculture, and no printing-presses ; but for their slight clothing they wear the bright skins of serpents, for corn, Nature gives them the bread-fruit ; and for intellectual amusement, they have a pregnant fancy and a ready wit ; tell inexhaustible stories, and always laugh at each other's jokes. A natural instinct gave them the art of making wine ; and it was the same benevolent Nature that blessed them also with the knowledge of the art of making love. But time flies even here. The lovely companions have danced, and sung, and banqueted, and laughed ; what further bliss remains for man ? They rise, and in pairs wander about the island, and then to their bowers ; their

life ends with the Night they love so well . and ere Day, the everlasting conqueror, wave his flaming standard in the luminous East, solitude and silence will again reign in the ISLE OF FANTAISIE.

Chapter II

The last and loudest chorus had died away, and the Islanders were pouring forth their libation to their great enemy the Sun, when suddenly a vast obscurity spread over the glowing West. They looked at each other, and turned pale, and the wine from their trembling goblets fell useless on the shore. The women were too frightened to scream, and, for the first time in the Isle of Fantaisie, silence existed after sunset. They were encouraged when they observed that the darkness ceased at that point in the heavens which overlooked their coral rocks, and perceiving that their hitherto unsoiled sky was pure, even at this moment of otherwise universal gloom, the men regained their colour, touched the goblets with their lips, further to reanimate themselves, and the women, now less discomposed, uttered loud shrieks.

Suddenly the wind roared with unaccustomed rage, the sea rose into large billows, and a ship was seen tossing in the offing. The Islanders, whose experience of navigation extended only to a slight paddling in their lagoon, in the half of a hollow trunk of a tree, for the purpose of fishing, mistook the tight little frigate for a great fish, and being now aware of the cause of this disturbance, and at the same time feeling confident that the monster could never make way through the shallow waters to the island, they recovered their courage, and gazed upon the labouring leviathan with the same interested nonchalance with which students at a modern lecture observe an expounding philosopher.

‘ What a shadow he casts over the sky ! ’ said the King,

a young man, whose divine right was never questioned by his female subjects ‘What a commotion in the waters, and what a wind he snorts forth ! It certainly must be the largest fish that exists. I remember my father telling me that a monstrous fish once got entangled among our rocks, and this part of the island really smelt for a month ; I cannot help fancying that there is a rather odd smell now ; pah !’

A favourite Queen flew to the suffering monarch, and pressing her aromatic lips upon his offended nostrils, his Majesty recovered.

The unhappy crew of the frigate, who, with the aid of their telescopes, had detected the crowds upon the shore, now fired their signal guns of distress, which came sullenly booming through the wind.

‘Oh ! the great fish is speaking !’ was the universal exclamation.

‘I begin to get frightened,’ said the favourite Queen. ‘I am sure the monster is coming here !’ So saying, her Majesty grasped up a handful of pearls from the shore, to defend herself.

As screaming was now the fashion, all the women of course screamed, and animated by the example of their sovereign, and armed with the marine gems, the Amazons assumed an imposing attitude.

Just at the moment that they had worked up their enthusiasm to the highest pitch, and were actually desirous of dying for their country, the ship sunk.

Chapter III

It is the flush of noon ; and, strange to say, a human figure is seen wandering on the shore of the Isle of Fantaisie.

‘One of the crew of the wrecked frigate, of course ? What an escape ! Fortunate creature ! interesting man !

Probably the indefatigable Captain Parry ; possibly the undaunted Captain Franklin ; perhaps the adventurous Captain Lyon !'

No ! sweet blue-eyed girl ! my plots are not of that extremely guessable nature so admired by your adorable sex. Indeed, this book is so constructed that if you were even, according to custom, to commence its perusal by reading the last page, you would not gain the slightest assistance in finding out ' how the story ends.'

The wanderer belongs to no frigate-building nation. He is a true Fantaisian, who having, in his fright, during yesterday's storm, lost the lock of hair which, in a moment of glorious favour, he had ravished from his fair mistress's brow, is now, after a sleepless night, tracing every remembered haunt of yesterday, with the fond hope of regaining his most precious treasure. Ye Gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease, know full well the anxiety and exertion, the days of management, and the nights of meditation which the rape of a lock requires, and you can consequently sympathise with the agitated feelings of the handsome and the hapless Popanilla.

The favourite of all the women, the envy of all the men Popanilla passed a pleasant life. No one was a better judge of wine, no one had a better taste for fruit, no one danced with more elegant vivacity, and no one whispered compliments in a more meaning tone. His stories ever had a point, his repartees were never ill-natured. What a pity that such an amiable fellow should have got into such a scrape !

In spite of his grief, however, Popanilla soon found that the ardency of his passion evaporated under a smoking sun ; and, exhausted, he was about to return home from his fruitless search, when his attention was attracted by a singular appearance. He observed before him, on the shore, a square and hitherto unseen form. He watched it for some minutes, but it was motionless. He drew nearer,

and observed it with intense attention ; but, if it were a being, it certainly was fast asleep. He approached close to its side. but it neither moved nor breathed. He applied his nose to the mysterious body, and the elegant Fantaisian drew back immediately from a most villainous smell of pitch. Not to excite too much, in this calm age, the reader's curiosity, let him know at once that this strange substance was a sea-chest. Upon it was marked, in large black letters, S. D. K. No 1.

For the first time in his life Popanilla experienced a feeling of overwhelming curiosity. His fatigue, his loss, the scorching hour, and the possible danger were all forgotten in an indefinite feeling that the body possessed contents more interesting than its unpromising exterior, and in a resolute determination that the development of the mystery should be reserved only for himself.

Although he felt assured that he must be unseen, he could not refrain from throwing a rapid glance of anxiety around him. It was a moment of perfect stillness : the island slept in sunshine, and even the waves had ceased to break over the opposing rocks. A thousand strange and singular thoughts rushed into his mind, but his first purpose was ever uppermost ; and at length, unfolding his girdle of skin, he tied the tough emeture round the chest, and, exerting all his powers, dragged his mysterious waif into the nearest wood.

But during this operation the top fell off, and revealed the neatest collection of little packages that ever pleased the eye of the admirer of spruce arrangement. Popanilla took up packets upon all possible subjects, smelt them, but they were not savory ; he was sorely puzzled. At last, he lighted on a slender volume bound in brown calf, which, with the confined but sensual notions of a savage, he mistook for gingerbread, at least. It was ' The Universal Linguist, by Mr Hamilton, or, the Art of Dreaming in Languages.'

No sooner had Popanilla passed that well-formed nose, which had been so often admired by the lady whose lock of hair he had unfortunately lost, a few times over a few pages of the *Hamiltonian System*, than he sank upon his bed of flowers, and, in spite of his curiosity, was instantly overcome by a profound slumber. But his slumber, though deep, was not peaceful, and he was the actor in an agitating drama.

He found himself alone in a gay and glorious garden. In the centre of it grew a pomegranate tree of prodigious size; its top was lost in the sky, and its innumerable branches sprang out in all directions, covered with large fruit of a rich golden hue. Beautiful birds were perched upon all parts of the tree, and chanted with perpetual melody the beauties of their bower. Tempted by the delicious sight, Popanilla stretched forward his ready hand to pluck, but no sooner had he grasped the fruit than the music immediately ceased, the birds rushed away, the sky darkened, the tree fell under the wind, the garden vanished, and Popanilla found himself in the midst of a raging sea, buffeting the waves.

He would certainly have been drowned had he not been immediately swallowed up by the huge monster which had not only been the occasion of the storm of yesterday, but, ah! most unhappy business! been the occasion also of his losing that lock of hair.

Ere he could congratulate himself on his escape he found fresh cause for anxiety, for he perceived that he was no longer alone. No friends were near him, but, on the contrary, he was surrounded by strangers of a far different aspect. They were men certainly, that is to say, they had legs and arms, and heads, and bodies as himself, but instead of that bloom of youth, that regularity of feature, that amiable joyousness of countenance, which he had ever been accustomed to meet and to love in his former companions, he recoiled in horror from the swarthy com-

plexions, the sad visages, and the haggard features of his present ones. They spoke to him in a harsh and guttural accent. He would have fled from their advances; but then he was in the belly of a whale! When he had become a little used to their tones he was gratified by finding that their attentions were far from hostile; and, after having received from them a few compliments, he began to think that they were not quite so ugly. He discovered that the object of their inquiries was the fatal pomegranate which still remained in his hand. They admired its beauty, and told him that they greatly esteemed an individual who possessed such a mass of precious ore. Popanilla begged to undeceive them, and courteously presented the fruit. No sooner, however, had he parted with this apple of discord, than the countenances of his companions changed. Immediately discovering its real nature, they loudly accused Popanilla of having deceived them, he remonstrated, and they recriminated, and the great fish, irritated by their clamour, lashed its huge tail, and with one efficacious vomit spouted the innocent Popanilla high in the air. He fell with such a dash into the waves that he was awakened by the sound of his own fall.

The dreamer awoke amidst real chattering, and snuffling, and clamour. A troop of green monkeys had been aroused by his unusual occupation, and had taken the opportunity of his slumber to become acquainted with some of the first principles of science. What progress they had made it is difficult to ascertain, because, each one throwing a tract at Popanilla's head, they immediately disappeared. It is said, however, that some monkeys have been since seen skipping about the island, with their tails cut off, and that they have even succeeded in passing themselves off for human beings among those people who do not read novels, and are consequently unacquainted with mankind.

The morning's adventure immediately rushed into Popanilla's mind, and he proceeded forthwith to examine

the contents of his chest, but with advantages which had not been yet enjoyed by those who had previously peeped into it. The monkeys had not been composed to sleep by the 'Universal Linguist' of Mr. Hamilton. As for Popanilla, he took up a treatise on hydrostatics, and read it straight through on the spot. For the rest of the day he was hydrostatically mad; nor could the commonest incident connected with the action or conveyance of water take place without his speculating on its cause and consequence.

So enraptured was Popanilla with his new accomplishments and acquirements that by degrees he avoided attendance on the usual evening assemblages, and devoted himself solely to the acquirement of useful knowledge. After a short time his absence was remarked, but the greatest and the most gifted has only to leave his coterie, called the world, for a few days, to be fully convinced of what slight importance he really is. And so Popanilla, the delight of society and the especial favourite of the women, was in a very short time not even inquired after. At first, of course, they supposed that he was in love, or that he had a slight cold, or that he was writing his memoirs; and as these suppositions, in due course, take their place in the annals of society as circumstantial histories, in about a week one knew the lady, another had heard him sneeze, and a third had seen the manuscript. At the end of another week Popanilla was forgotten.

Chapter IV

Six months had elapsed since the first chest of the cargo of Useful Knowledge destined for the fortunate Maldives had been digested by the recluse Popanilla. for a recluse he had now become. Great students are rather dull companions. Our Fantaisian friend, during his first

studies, was as moody, absent, and querulous as are most men of genius during that mystical period of life. He was consequently avoided by the men and quizzed by the women, and consoled himself for the neglect of the first and the taunts of the second by the indefinite sensation that he should, some day or other, turn out that little being called a great man. As for his mistress, she considered herself insulted by being addressed by a man who had lost her lock of hair. When the chest was exhausted Popanilla was seized with a profound melancholy. Nothing depresses a man's spirits more completely than a self-conviction of self-conceit; and Popanilla, who had been accustomed to consider himself and his companions as the most elegant portion of the visible creation, now discovered, with dismay, that he and his fellow-islanders were nothing more than a horde of useless savages.

This mortification, however, was soon succeeded by a proud consciousness that he, at any rate, was now civilised; and that proud consciousness by a fond hope that in a short time he might become a civiliser. Like all projectors, he was not of a sanguine temperament; but he did trust that in the course of another season the Isle of Fantaisie might take its station among the nations. He was determined, however, not to be too rapid. It cannot be expected that ancient prejudices can in a moment be eradicated, and new modes of conduct instantaneously substituted and established. Popanilla, like a wise man, determined to conciliate. His views were to be as liberal, as his principles were enlightened. Men should be forced to do nothing. Bigotry, and intolerance, and persecution were the objects of his decided disapprobation, resembling, in this particular, all the great and good men who have ever existed, who have invariably maintained this opinion so long as they have been in the minority.

Popanilla appeared once more in the world

‘Dear me! is that you, Pop?’ exclaimed the ladies.

‘What have you been doing with yourself all this time? Travelling, I suppose. Every one travels now. Really you travelled men get quite bores. And where did you get that coat, if it be a coat?’

Such was the style in which the Fantaisian females saluted the long absent Popanilla. and really, when a man shuts himself up from the world for a considerable time, and fancies that in condescending to re-enter it he has surely the right to expect the homage due to a superior being, these salutations are awkward. The ladies of England peculiarly excel in this species of annihilation, and while they continue to drown puppies, as they daily do, in a sea of sarcasm, I think no true Englishman will hesitate one moment in giving them the preference for tact and manner over all the vivacious French, all the self-possessing Italian, and all the tolerant German women. This is a clap-trap, and I have no doubt will sell the book.

Popanilla, however, had not re-entered society with the intention of subsiding into a nonentity, and he therefore took the opportunity, a few minutes after sunset, just as his companions were falling into the dance, to beg the favour of being allowed to address his sovereign only for one single moment.

‘Sir!’ said he, in that mild tone of subdued superciliousness with which we should always address kings, and which, while it vindicates our dignity, satisfactorily proves that we are above the vulgar passion of envy, ‘Sir!’ but let us not encourage that fatal faculty of oratory so dangerous to free states, and therefore let us give only the ‘substance of Popanilla’s speech.’* He commenced his address in a manner somewhat resembling the initial observations of those pleasing pamphlets which are the fashion of the present hour; and which, being intended to

* *Substance of a speech*, in Parliamentary language, means a printed edition of an harangue which contains all that was uttered in the House, and about as much again.

diffuse information among those who have not enjoyed the opportunity and advantages of study, and are consequently of a gay and cheerful disposition, treat of light subjects in a light and polished style. Popanilla, therefore, spoke of man in a savage state, the origin of society, and the elements of the social compact, in sentences which would not have disgraced the mellifluous pen of Bentham. From these he naturally digressed into an agreeable disquisition on the Anglo-Saxons ; and, after a little badinage on the Bill of Rights, flew off to an airy *aperçu* of the French Revolution. When he had arrived at the Isle of Fantaisie he begged to inform his Majesty that man was born for something else besides enjoying himself. It was, doubtless, extremely pleasant to dance and sing, to crown themselves with chaplets, and to drink wine ; but he was ‘ free to confess ’ that he did not imagine that the most barefaced hireling of corruption could for a moment presume to maintain that there was any utility in pleasure. If there were no utility in pleasure, it was quite clear that pleasure could profit no one. If, therefore, it were unprofitable, it was injurious, because that which does not produce a profit is equivalent to a loss ; therefore pleasure is a losing business ; consequently pleasure is not pleasant.

He also showed that man was not born for himself, but for society : that the interests of the body are alone to be considered, and not those of the individual, and that a nation might be extremely happy, extremely powerful, and extremely rich, although every individual member of it might at the same time be miserable, dependent, and in debt. He regretted to observe that no one in the island seemed in the slightest degree conscious of the object of his being. Man is created for a purpose ; the object of his existence is to perfect himself. Man is imperfect by nature, because if nature had made him perfect he would have had no wants, and it is only by supplying his wants that utility can be developed. The development of utility is therefore

the object of our being, and the attainment of this great end the cause of our existence. This principle clears all doubts, and rationally accounts for a state of existence which has puzzled many pseudo-philosophers.

Popanilla then went on to show that the hitherto received definitions of man were all erroneous, that man is neither a walking animal, nor a talking animal, nor a cooking animal, nor a lounging animal, nor a debt-incurring animal, nor a tax-paying animal, nor a printing animal, nor a puffing animal, but a *developing animal*. Development is the discovery of utility. By developing the water we get fish, by developing the earth we get corn, and cash, and cotton, by developing the air we get breath; by developing the fire we get heat. Thus, the use of the elements is demonstrated to the meanest capacity. But it was not merely a material development to which he alluded; a moral development was equally indispensable. He showed that it was impossible for a nation either to think too much or to do too much. The life of man was therefore to be passed in a moral and material development until he had consummated his perfection. It was the opinion of Popanilla that this great result was by no means so near at hand as some philosophers flattered themselves, and that it might possibly require another half-century before even the most civilised nation could be said to have completed the destiny of the human race. At the same time, he intimated that there were various extraordinary means by which this rather desirable result might be facilitated, and there was no saying what the building of a new University might do, of which, when built, he had no objection to be appointed Principal.

In answer to those who affect to admire that deficient system of existence which they style simplicity of manners, and who are perpetually committing the blunder of supposing that every advance towards perfection only withdraws man further from his primitive and proper condition,

Popanilla triumphantly demonstrated that no such order as that which they associated with the phrase 'state of nature' ever existed. 'Man,' said he, 'is called the masterpiece of nature, and man is also, as we all know, the most curious of machines; now, a machine is a work of art, consequently, the masterpiece of nature is the masterpiece of art. The object of all mechanism is the attainment of utility; the object of man, who is the most perfect machine, is utility in the highest degree. Can we believe, therefore, that this machine was ever intended for a state which never could have called forth its powers, a state in which no utility could ever have been attained, a state in which there are no wants; consequently, no demand, consequently, no supply; consequently, no competition; consequently, no invention; consequently, no profits, only one great pernicious monopoly of comfort and ease? Society without wants is like a world without winds. It is quite clear, therefore, that there is no such thing as Nature; Nature is Art, or Art is Nature, that which is most useful is most natural, because utility is the test of nature; therefore a steam-engine is in fact a much more natural production than a mountain *

'You are convinced, therefore,' he continued, 'by these observations, that it is impossible for an individual or a nation to be too artificial in their manners, their ideas, their laws, or their general policy, because, in fact, the more artificial you become the nearer you approach that state of nature of which you are so perpetually talking.' Here observing that some of his audience appeared to be a little sceptical, perhaps only surprised, he told them that

* The age seems as anti-mountainous as it is anti-monarchical. A late writer insinuates that if the English had spent their millions in levelling the Andes, instead of excavating the table-lands, society might have been benefited. These monstrosities are decidedly useless, and therefore can neither be sublime nor beautiful, as has been unanswerably demonstrated by another recent writer on political æsthetics—See also a personal attack on Mont Blanc, in the second number of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 1828

what he said must be true, because it entirely consisted of first principles¹

After having thus preliminarily descanted for about two hours, Popanilla informed his Majesty that he was unused to public speaking, and then proceeded to show that the grand characteristic of the social action[†] of the Isle of Fantaisie was a total want of development. This he observed with equal sorrow and surprise; he respected the wisdom of their ancestors; at the same time, no one could deny that they were both barbarous and ignorant; he highly esteemed also the constitution, but regretted that it was not in the slightest degree adapted to the existing want of society: he was not for destroying any establishments, but, on the contrary, was for courteously affording them the opportunity of self-dissolution. He finished by re-urging, in strong terms, the immediate development of the island. In the first place, a great metropolis must be instantly built, because a great metropolis always produces a great demand, and, moreover, Popanilla had some legal doubts whether a country without a capital could in fact be considered a State. Apologising for having so long trespassed upon the attention of the assembly, he begged distinctly to state[‡] that he had no wish to see his Majesty and his fellow-subjects adopt these new principles without examination and without experience. They might commence on a small scale, let them cut down their forests, and by turning them into ships and houses discover the utility of timber; let the whole island be dug up, let canals be cut, docks be built, and all the elephants be

* First principles are the ingredients of positive truth. They are immutable, as may be seen by comparing the first principles of the eighteenth century with the first principles of the nineteenth

† This simple and definite phrase we derive from the nation to whom we were indebted during the last century for some other phrases about as definite, but rather more dangerous

‡ Another phrase of Parliament, which, I need not observe, is always made use of in oratory when the orator can see his meaning about as distinctly as Sancho perceived the charms of Dulcinea

killed directly, that their teeth might yield an immediate article for exportation. A short time would afford a sufficient trial. In the meanwhile, they would not be pledged to further measures, and these might be considered 'only as an experiment' * Taking for granted that these principles would be acted on, and taking into consideration the site of the island in the map of the world, the nature and extent of its resources, its magnificent race of human beings, its varieties of the animal creation, its wonderfully fine timber, its undeveloped mineral treasures, the spaciousness of its harbours, and its various facilities for extended international communication, Popanilla had no hesitation in saying that a short time could not elapse ere, instead of passing their lives in a state of unprofitable ease and useless enjoyment, they might reasonably expect to be the terror and astonishment of the universe, and to be able to annoy every nation of any consequence.

Here, observing a smile upon his Majesty's countenance, Popanilla told the King that he was only a chief magistrate, and he had no more right to laugh at him than a parish constable. He concluded by observing that although what he at present urged might appear strange, nevertheless, if the listeners had been acquainted with the characters and cases of Galileo and Turgot, they would then have seen, as a necessary consequence, that his system was perfectly correct, and he himself a man of extraordinary merit.

Here the chief magistrate, no longer daring to smile, burst into a fit of laughter, and turning to his courtiers said, 'I have not an idea what this man is talking about, but I know that he makes my head ache : give me a cup of wine, and let us have a dance.'

All applauded the royal proposition ; and pushing Popanilla from one to another, until he was fairly hustled to the brink of the lagoon, they soon forgot the existence of

* A very famous and convenient phrase this—but in politics *experiments* mean *revolutions* 1828

this bore · in one word, he was cut. When Popanilla found himself standing alone, and looking grave while all the rest were gay, he began to suspect that he was not so influential a personage as he previously imagined. Rather crest-fallen, he sneaked home ; and consoled himself for having nobody to speak to by reading some amusing ‘ Conversations on Political Economy.’

Chapter V

Popanilla was discomposed, but he was not discomfited. He consoled himself for the Royal neglect by the recollection of the many illustrious men who had been despised, banished, imprisoned, and burnt for the maintenance of opinions which, centuries afterwards, had been discovered to be truth. He did not forget that in still further centuries the lately recognised truth had been re-discovered to be falsehood, but then these men were not less illustrious, and what wonder that their opinions were really erroneous, since they were not his present ones ? The reasoning was equally conclusive and consolatory. Popanilla, therefore, was not discouraged, and although he deemed it more prudent not to go out of his way to seek another audience of his sovereign, or to be too anxious again to address a public meeting, he nevertheless determined to proceed cautiously, but constantly, propagating his doctrines and proselytising in private.

Unfortunately for Popanilla, he did not enjoy one advantage which all founders of sects have duly appreciated, and by which they have been materially assisted. It is a great and an unanswerable argument in favour of a Providence that we constantly perceive that the most beneficial results are brought about by the least worthy and most insignificant agents. The purest religions would never have been established had they not been supported

by sinners who felt the burthen of the old faith ; and the most free and enlightened governments are often generated by the discontented, the disappointed, and the dissolute. Now, in the Isle of Fantaisie, unfortunately for our revolutioniser, there was not a single gambler.

Unable, therefore, to make the bad passions of his fellow-creatures the unconscious instruments of his good purposes, Popanilla must have been contented to have monopolised all the wisdom of the moderns, had he not, with the unshuffled wit of an inventor, hit upon a new expedient. Like Socrates, our philosopher began to cultivate with sedulousness the society of youth.

In a short time the ladies of Fantaisie were forced to observe that the fair sex most unfashionably predominated in their evening assemblages, for the young gentlemen of the island had suddenly ceased to pay their graceful homage at the altar of Terpsichore. In an Indian isle not to dance was as bad as heresy. The ladies rallied the recreants, but their playful sarcasms failed of their wonted effect. In the natural course of things they had recourse to remonstrances, but their appeals were equally fruitless. The delicate creatures tried reproaches, but the boyish cynics received them with a scowl and answered them with a sneer.

The women fled in indignation to their friendly monarch, but the voluptuary of nature only shrugged his shoulders and smiled. He kissed away their tears, and their frowns vanished as he crowned their long hair with roses.

‘ If the lads really show such bad taste,’ said his Majesty, ‘ why I and my lords must do double duty, and dance with a couple of you at once.’ Consoled and complimented, and crowned by a King, who could look sad ? The women forgot their anger in their increasing loyalty.

But the pupils of Popanilla had no sooner mastered the first principles of science than they began to throw off their retired habits and uncommunicative manners. Being

not utterly ignorant of some of the rudiments of knowledge. and consequently having completed their education, it was now their duty, as members of society, to instruct and not to study. They therefore courted, instead of shunned, their fellow-creatures, and on all occasions seized all opportunities of assisting the spread of knowledge. The voices of lecturing boys resounded in every part of the island. Their tones were so shrill, their manners so presuming, their knowledge so crude, and their general demeanour so completely unamiable, that it was impossible to hear them without delight, advantage, and admiration.

The women were not now the only sufferers and the only complainers. Dinned to death, the men looked gloomy, and even the King, for the first time in his life, looked grave. Could this Babel, he thought, be that empire of bliss, that delightful Fantaisie, where to be ruler only proved that you were the most skilful in making others happy? His brow ached under his light flowery crown, as if it were bound by the barbarous circle of a tyrant, heavy with gems and gold. In his despair he had some thoughts of leaving his kingdom and betaking himself to the mermaids.

The determination of the most precious portion of his subjects saved his empire. As the disciples of the new school were daily demanding, 'What is the use of dancing? what is the use of drinking wine? what is the use of smelling flowers?' the women, like present politicians, began to entertain a nervous suspicion that in time these sages might even presume to question the utility of that homage which, in spite of the Grecian Philosophers and the British Essayists, we have been in the habit of conceding to them ever since Eden, and they rushed again to the King like frightened deer. Something now was to be done, and the monarch, with an expression of countenance which almost amounted to energy, whispered consolation.

The King sent for Popanilla, the message produced a great sensation, the enlightened introducer of the new

principles had not been at Court since he was cut. No doubt his Majesty was at last impregnated with the liberal spirit of the age, and Popanilla was assuredly to be Premier. In fact, it must be so, he was 'sent for', there was no precedent in Fantaisie, though there might be in other islands, for a person being 'sent for' and not being Premier. His disciples were in high spirits; the world was now to be regulated upon right principles, and they were to be installed into their right places.

'Illustrious Popanilla!' said the King, 'you once did me the honour of making me a speech which, unfortunately for myself, I candidly confess, I was then incapable of understanding; no wonder, as it was the first I ever heard. I shall not, however, easily forget the effect which it produced upon me. I have since considered it my duty, as a monarch, to pay particular attention to your suggestions. I now understand them with sufficient clearness to be fully convinced of their excellence, and in future I intend to act upon them, without any exception or deviation. To prove my sincerity, I have determined to commence the new system at once; and as I think that, without some extension of our international relations, the commercial interest of this island will be incapable of furnishing the taxes which I intend to levy, I have determined, therefore, to fit out an expedition for the purpose of discovering new islands and forming relations with new islanders. It is but due to your merit that you should be appointed to the command of it; and further to testify my infinite esteem for your character, and my complete confidence in your abilities, I make you post-captain on the spot. As the axiom of your school seems to be that everything can be made perfect at once, without time, without experience, without practice, and without preparation, I have no doubt, with the aid of a treatise or two, you will make a consummate naval commander, although you have never been at sea in the whole course of your life. Farewell, Captain Popanilla!'

No sooner was this adieu uttered than four brawny lords of the bedchamber seized the Turgot of Fantaisie by the shoulders, and carried him with inconceivable rapidity to the shore. His pupils, who would have fled to his rescue, were stifled with the embraces of their former partners, and their utilitarianism dissolved in the arms of those they once so rudely rejected. As for their tutor, he was thrust into one of the canoes, with some fresh water, bread-fruit, dried fish, and a basket of alligator-pears. A band of mermaids carried the canoe with exquisite management through the shallows and over the breakers, and poor Popanilla in a few minutes found himself out at sea. Tremendously frightened, he offered to recant all his opinions, and denounce as traitors any individuals whom the Court might select. But his former companions did not exactly detect the utility of his return. His offers, his supplications, were equally fruitless, and the only answer which floated to him on the wind was, 'Farewell. Captain Popanilla !'

Chapter VI

Night fell upon the waters, dark and drear, and thick and misty. How unlike those brilliant hours that once summoned him to revelry and love ! Unhappy Popanilla ! Thy delicious Fantaisie has vanished ! Ah, pitiable youth ! What could possibly have induced you to be so very rash ? And all from that unlucky lock of hair !

After a few natural paroxysms of rage, terror, anguish, and remorse, the Captain as naturally subsided into despair, and awaited with sullen apathy that fate which could not be far distant. The only thing which puzzled the philosophical navigator was his inability to detect what useful end could be attained by his death. At length, remembering that fish must be fed, his theory and his desperation were at the same time confirmed.

A clear, dry morning succeeded the wet, gloomy night, and Popanilla had not yet gone down. This extraordinary suspension of his fate roused him from his stupor, and between the consequent excitement and the morning air he acquired an appetite. Philosophical physicians appear to have agreed that sorrow, to a certain extent, is not unfavourable to digestion, and as Popanilla began to entertain some indefinite and unreasonable hopes, the alligator-pears quickly disappeared. In the meantime the little canoe cut her way as if she were chasing a smuggler, and had it not been for a shark or two who, in anticipation of their services being required, never left her side for a second, Popanilla really might have made some ingenious observations on the nature of tides. He was rather surprised, certainly, as he watched his frail bark cresting the waves, but he soon supposed that this was all in the natural course of things, and he now ascribed his previous fright, not to the peril of his situation, but to his inexperience of it.

Although his apprehension of being drowned was now removed, yet when he gazed on the boundless vacancy before him, and also observed that his provisions rapidly decreased, he began to fear that he was destined for a still more horrible fate, and that, after having eaten his own shoes, he must submit to be starved. In this state of despondency, with infinite delight and exultation he clearly observed, on the second day, at twenty-seven minutes past three P.M., though at a considerable distance, a mountain and an island. His joy and his pride were equal, and excessive: he called the first Alligator Mountain, in gratitude to the pears, and christened the second after his mistress, that unlucky mistress! The swift canoe soon reached the discoveries, and the happy discoverer further found, to his mortification, that the mountain was a mist and the island a sea-weed. Popanilla now grew sulky, and threw himself down in the bottom of his boat.

On the third morning he was awakened by a tremendous roar, on looking around him he perceived that he was in a valley formed by two waves each several hundred feet high. This seemed the crisis of his fate; he shut his eyes, as people do when they are touched by a dentist, and in a few minutes was still bounding on the ocean in the eternal canoe, safe but senseless. Some tremendous peals of thunder, a roaring wind and a scathing lightning confirmed his indisposition, and had not the tempest subsided, Popanilla would probably have been an idiot for life. The dead and soothing calm which succeeded this tornado called him back again gradually to existence. He opened his eyes, and, scarcely daring to try a sense, immediately shut them, then heaving a deep sigh, he shrugged his shoulders, and looked as pitiable as a prime minister with a rebellious cabinet. At length he ventured to lift up his head, there was not a wrinkle on the face of ocean: a halcyon fluttered over him, and then scudded before his canoe, and gamesome porpoises were tumbling at his side. The sky was cloudless, except in the direction to which he was driving; but even as Popanilla observed, with some misgivings, the mass of vapours which had there congregated, the great square and solid black clouds drew off like curtains, and revealed to his entranced vision a magnificent city rising out of the sea.

Tower, and dome, and arch, column, and spire, and obelisk, and lofty terraces, and many-windowed palaces, rose in all directions from a mass of building which appeared to him each instant to grow more huge, till at length it seemed to occupy the whole horizon. The sun lent additional lustre to the dazzling quays of white marble which apparently surrounded this mighty city, and which rose immediately from the dark blue waters. As the navigator drew nearer, he observed that in most parts the quays were crowded with beings who, he trusted, were human, and already the hum of multitudes broke upon his inexperienced

ear · to him a sound far more mysterious and far more exciting than the most poetical of winds to the most windy of poets. On the right of this vast city rose what was mistaken by Popanilla for an immense but leafless forest , but more practical men than the Fantaisian Captain have been equally confounded by the first sight of a million of masts.

The canoe cut its way with increasing rapidity, and ere Popanilla had recovered himself sufficiently to make even an ejaculation, he found himself at the side of a quay. Some amphibious creatures, whom he supposed to be mermen, immediately came to his assistance, rather stared at his serpent-skin coat, and then helped him up the steps. Popanilla was instantly surrounded

‘ Who are you ? ’ said one

‘ What are you ? ’ asked another.

‘ Who is it ? ’ exclaimed a third.

‘ What is it ? ’ screamed a fourth

‘ My friends, I am a man ! ’

‘ A man ! ’ said the women , ‘ are you sure you are a real man ? ’

‘ He must be a sea-god ! ’ said the females.

‘ She must be a sea-goddess ! ’ said the males

‘ A Triton ! ’ maintained the women

‘ A Nereid ! ’ argued the men

‘ It is a great fish ! ’ said the boys

Thanks to the Universal Linguist, Captain Popanilla, under these peculiar circumstances, was more loquacious than could have been Captain Parry

‘ Good people ! you see before you the most injured of human beings ’

This announcement inspired general enthusiasm The women wept, the men shook hands with him, and all the boys huzzaed Popanilla proceeded :

‘ Actuated by the most pure, the most patriotic, the most noble, the most enlightened, and the most useful sentiments,

I aspired to ameliorate the condition of my fellow-men. To this grand object I have sacrificed all that makes life delightful. I have lost my station in society, my taste for dancing, my popularity with the men, my favour with the women ; and last, but, oh ! not least (excuse this emotion), I have lost a very particular lock of hair. In one word, my friends, you see before you, banished, ruined, and unhappy, the victim of a despotic sovereign, a corrupt aristocracy, and a misguided people.

No sooner had he ceased speaking than Popanilla really imagined that he had only escaped the dangers of sedition and the sea to expire by less hostile, though not less effective, means. To be strangled was not much better than to be starved : and certainly, with half-a-dozen highly respectable females clinging round his neck, he was not reminded for the first time in his life what a domestic bowstring is an affectionate woman. In an agony of suffocation he thought very little of his arms, although the admiration of the men had already, in his imagination, separated these useful members from his miserable body, and had it not been for some justifiable kicking and plunging, the veneration of the ingenuous and surrounding youth, which manifested itself by their active exertions to divide his singular garment into robes of a martyr of liberty, would soon have effectually prevented the ill-starred Popanilla from being again mistaken for a Nereid. Order was at length restored, and a committee of eight appointed to regulate the visits of the increasing mob.

The arrangements were judicious, the whole populace was marshalled into ranks, classes of twelve persons were allowed consecutively to walk past the victim of tyranny, corruption, and ignorance ; and each person had the honour to touch his finger. During this proceeding, which lasted a few hours, an influential personage generously offered to receive the eager subscriptions of the assembled thousands. Even the boys subscribed, and ere six hours had passed

since his arrival as a coatless vagabond in this liberal city, Captain Popanilla found himself a person of considerable means

The receiver of the subscriptions, while he crammed Popanilla's serpent-skin pockets full of gold pieces, at the same time kindly offered the stranger to introduce him to an hotel. Popanilla, who was quite beside himself, could only bow his assent, and mechanically accompanied his conductor. When he had regained his faculty of speech, he endeavoured, in wandering sentences of grateful incoherency, to express his deep sense of this unparalleled liberality 'It was an excess of generosity in which mankind could never have before indulged!'

'By no means!' said his companion, with great coolness, 'far from this being an unparalleled affair, I assure you it is a matter of hourly occurrence: make your mind quite easy. You are probably not aware that you are now living in the richest and the most charitable country in the world?'

'Wonderful!' said Popanilla, 'and what is the name, may I ask, of this charitable city?'

'Is it possible,' said his companion, with a faint smile, 'that you are ignorant of the great city of Hubbabub, the largest city not only that exists, but that ever did exist, and the capital of the island of Vraibleusia, the most famous island not only that is known, but that ever was known?'

While he was speaking they were accosted by a man upon crutches, who, telling them in a broken voice that he had a wife and twelve infant children dependent on his support, supplicated a little charity. Popanilla was about to empty part of his pocketfuls into the mendicant's cap, but his companion repressed his unphilosophical facility. 'By no means!' said his friend, who, turning round to the beggar, advised him, in a mild voice, to *work*, calmly adding, that if he presumed to ask charity again he should certainly have him bastinadoed. Then they walked on.

Popanilla's attention was so distracted by the variety, the number, the novelty, and the noise of the objects which were incessantly hurried upon his observation, that he found no time to speak ; and as his companion, though exceedingly polite, was a man of few words, conversation rather flagged.

At last, overwhelmed by the magnificence of the streets, the splendour of the shops, the number of human beings, the rattling of the vehicles, the dashing of the horses, and a thousand other sounds and objects, Popanilla gave loose to a loud and fervent wish that his hotel might have the good fortune of being situated in this interesting quarter.

'By no means !' said his companion ; 'we have yet much further to go. Far from this being a desirable situation for you, my friend, no civilised person is ever seen here ; and had not the cause of civil and religious liberty fortunately called me to the water-side to-day, I should have lost the opportunity of showing how greatly I esteem a gentleman who has suffered so severely in the cause of national amelioration.'

'Sir !' said Popanilla, 'your approbation is the only reward which I ever shall desire for my exertions. You will excuse me for not quite keeping up with you ; but the fact is, my pockets are so stuffed with cash that the action of my legs is greatly impeded.'

'Credit me, my friend, that you are suffering from an inconvenience which you will not long experience in Hubbabub. Nevertheless, to remedy it at present, I think the best thing we can do is to buy a purse.'

They accordingly entered a shop where such an article might be found, and taking up a small sack, for Popanilla was very rich, his companion inquired its price, which he was informed was four crowns. No sooner had the desired information been given than the proprietor of the opposite shop rushed in, and offered him the same article for three crowns. The original merchant, not at all surprised at

the intrusion, and not the least apologising for his former extortion, then demanded two. His rival, being more than his match, he courteously dropped upon his knee, and requested his customer to accept the article gratis, for his sake. The generous dealer would infallibly have carried the day, had not his rival humbly supplicated the purchaser not only to receive his article as a gift, but also the compliment of a crown inside.

‘What a terrible cheat the first merchant must have been!’ said the puzzled Popanilla, as they proceeded on their way.

‘By no means!’ said his calm companion; ‘the purse was sufficiently cheap even at four crowns. This is not Cheatery; this is Competition!’

‘What a wonderful nation, then, this must be, where you not only get purses gratis but even well loaded! What use, then, is all this heavy gold? It is a tremendous trouble to carry, I will empty the bag into this kennel, for money surely can be of no use in a city where, when in want of cash, you have only to go into a shop and buy a purse!’

‘Your pardon!’ said his companion, ‘far from this being the case, Vraibleusia is, without doubt, the dearest country in the world’

‘If, then,’ said the inquisitive Popanilla, with great animation, ‘if, then, this country be the dearest in the world, if, how

‘My good friend!’ said his companion, ‘I really am the last person in the world to answer questions. All that I know is, that this country is extremely dear, and that the only way to get things cheap is to encourage Competition’

Here the progress of his companion was impeded for some time by a great crowd, which had assembled to catch a glimpse of a man who was to fly off a steeple, but who had not yet arrived. A chimney-sweeper observed to a scientific friend that probably the density of the atmosphere might prevent the intended volitation; and Popanilla,

who, having read almost as many pamphlets as the observer, now felt quite at home, exceedingly admired the observation.

‘He must be a very superior man, this gentleman in black!’ said Popanilla to his companion.

‘By no means!’ he is of the lowest class in society. But you are probably not aware that you are in the most educated country in the world.’

‘Delightful!’ said Popanilla.

The Captain was exceedingly desirous of witnessing the flight of the Vraibleusian Dædalus, but his friend advised their progress. This, however, was not easy, and Popanilla, animated for the moment by his natural aristocratic disposition, and emboldened by his superior size and strength, began to clear his way in a manner which was more cogent than logical. The chimney-sweeper and his comrades were soon in arms, and Popanilla would certainly have been killed or ducked by this superior man and his friends, had it not been for the mild remonstrance of his conductor and the singular appearance of his costume.

‘What could have induced you to be so imprudent?’ said his rescuer, when they had escaped from the crowd

‘Truly,’ said Popanilla, ‘I thought that in a country where you may bastinado the wretch who presumes to ask you for alms, there could surely be no objection to my knocking down the scoundrel who dared to stand in my way.’

‘By no means!’ said his friend, slightly elevating his eyebrows. ‘Here all men are equal. You are probably not aware that you are at present in the freest country in the world.’

‘I do not exactly understand you, what is this freedom?’

‘My good friend, I really am the last person in the world to answer questions. Freedom is, in one word, Liberty: a kind of thing which you foreigners never can understand,

and which mere theory can make no man understand. When you have been in the island a few weeks all will be quite clear to you. In the meantime, do as others do, and never knock men down ! ’

Chapter VII

‘ Although we are yet some way from our hotel,’ remarked Popanilla’s conductor, ‘ we have now arrived at a part of the city where I can ease you, without difficulty, from your troublesome burthen , let us enter here ! ’

As he spoke, they stopped before a splendid palace, and proceeding through various halls full of individuals apparently intently busied, the companions were at last ushered into an apartment of smaller size, but of more elegant character. A personage of prepossessing appearance was lolling on a couch of an appearance equally prepossessing. Before him, on a table, were some papers, exquisite fruits, and some liqueurs. Popanilla was presented, and received with fascinating complaisance. His friend stated the object of their visit, and handed the sackful of gold to the gentleman on the sofa. The gentleman on the sofa ordered a couple of attendants to ascertain its contents. While this computation was going on he amused his guests by his lively conversation, and charmed Popanilla by his polished manners and easy civility. He offered him, during his stay in Vraibleusia, the use of a couple of equipages, a villa, and an opera-box, insisted upon sending to his hotel some pineapples and some rare wine, and gave him a perpetual ticket to his picture-gallery. When his attendants had concluded their calculation, he ordered them to place Popanilla’s precious metal in his treasury, and then, presenting the Captain with a small packet of pink shells, he kindly enquired whether he could be of any further use to him. Popanilla was loth

to retire without his gold, of the utility of which, in spite of the conveniency of competition, he seemed to possess an instinctive conception, but as his friend rose and withdrew, he could do nothing less than accompany him, for, having now known him nearly half a day, his confidence in his honour and integrity was naturally unbounded.

‘That was the King, of course?’ said Popanilla, when they were fairly out of the palace

‘The King!’ said the unknown, nearly surprised into an exclamation, ‘by no means!’

‘And what then?’

‘My good friend! is it possible that you have no bankers in your country?’

‘Yes it is very possible, but we have mermaids, who also give us shells which are pretty. What then are your bankers?’

‘Really, my good friend, that is a question which I never remember having been asked before, but a banker is a man who keeps our money for us’

‘Ah! and he is bound, I suppose, to return your money when you choose?’

‘Most assuredly!’

‘He is, then, in fact, your servant. you must pay him handsomely, for him to live so well?’

‘By no means! we pay him nothing.’

‘That is droll, he must be very rich then?’

‘Really, my dear friend, I cannot say. Why yes! I suppose he may be very rich!’

‘’Tis singular that a rich man should take so much trouble for others!’

‘My good friend! of course he lives by his trouble.’

‘Ah! How, then,’ continued the inquisitive Fantaisian, ‘if you do not pay him for his services, and he yet lives by them, how, I pray, does he acquire these immense riches?’

‘Really, my good sir, I am, in truth, the very last man

in the world to answer questions : he is a banker , bankers are always rich ; but why they are, or how they are, I really never had time to inquire But I suppose, if the truth were known, they must have very great opportunities.'

' Ah ! I begin to see,' said Popanilla. ' It was really very kind of him,' continued the Captain, ' to make me a present of these little pink shells : what would I not give to turn them into a necklace, and send it to a certain person at Fantaisie ! '

' It would be a very expensive necklace,' observed his companion, almost surprised ' I had no idea, I confess, from your appearance, that in your country they indulged in such expensive tastes in costume.'

' Expensive ! ' said Popanilla. ' We certainly have no such shells as these in Fantaisie ; but we have much more beautiful ones. I should think, from their look, they must be rather common '

His conductor for the first time nearly laughed ' I forgot,' said he, ' that you could not be aware that these pink shells are the most precious coin of the land, compared with which those bits of gold with which you have recently parted are nothing , your whole fortune is now in that little packet The fact is,' continued the unknown, making an effort to communicate, ' although we possess in this country more of the precious metals than all the rest of the world together, the quantity is nevertheless utterly disproportioned to the magnitude of our wealth and our wants. We have been, therefore, under the necessity of resorting to other means of representing the first and supplying the second , and, taking advantage of our insular situation, we have introduced these small pink shells, which abound all round the coast Being much more convenient to carry, they are in general circulation, and no genteel person has ever anything else in his pocket '

' Wonderful ! But surely, then, it is no very difficult thing in this country to accumulate a fortune, since all that

is necessary to give you every luxury of life is a stroll one morning of your existence along the beach ? ’

‘ By no means, my friend ! you are really too rapid. The fact is, that no one has the power of originally circulating these shells but our Government , and if any one, by any chance, choose to violate this arrangement, we make up for depriving him of his solitary walks on the shore by instant submersion in the sea.’

‘ Then the whole circulation of the country is at the mercy of your Government ? ’ remarked Popanilla, summoning to his recollection the contents of one of those shipwrecked *brochures* which had exercised so strange an influence on his destiny. ‘ Suppose they do not choose to issue ? ’

‘ That is always guarded against The mere quarterly payments of interest upon our national debt will secure an ample supply.’

‘ Debt ! I thought you were the richest nation in the world ? ’

‘ ’Tis true , nevertheless, if there were a golden pyramid with a base as big as the whole earth and an apex touching the heavens, it would not supply us with sufficient metal to satisfy our creditors ’

‘ But, my dear sir,’ exclaimed the perplexed Popanilla, ‘ if this really be true, how then can you be said to be the richest nation in the world ? ’

‘ It is very simple The annual interest upon our debt exceeds the whole wealth of the rest of the world , therefore we must be the richest nation in the world ’

‘ ’Tis true,’ said Popanilla , ‘ I see I have yet much to learn But with regard to these pink shells, how can you possibly create for them a certain standard of value ? It is merely agreement among yourselves that fixes any value to them ’

‘ By no means ! you are so rapid ! Each shell is immediately convertible into gold , of which metal, let me again remind you, we possess more than any other nation , but

which, indeed, we only keep as a sort of dress coin, chiefly to indulge the prejudices of foreigners.'

'But,' said the perpetual Popanilla, 'suppose every man who held a shell on the same day were to'

'My good friend! I really am the last person in the world to give explanations. In Vraibleusia, we have so much to do that we have no time to think, a habit which only becomes nations who are not employed. You are now fast approaching the Great Shell Question; a question which, I confess, affects the interests of every man in this island more than any other; but of which, I must candidly own, every man in this island is more ignorant than of any other. No one, however, can deny that the system works well, and if anything at any time go wrong, why really Mr. Secretary Periwinkle is a wonderful man, and our most eminent conchologist. He, no doubt, will set it right, and if, by any chance, things are past even his management, why then, I suppose, to use our national motto, *something will turn up*.'

Here they arrived at the hotel. Having made every arrangement for the comfort and convenience of the Fantaisian stranger, Popanilla's conductor took his leave, previously informing him that his name was Skindeep, that he was a member of one of the largest families in the island, that, had he not been engaged to attend a lecture, he would have stayed and dined with him; but that he would certainly call upon him on the morrow.

Compared with his hotel the palace of his banker was a dungeon, even the sunset voluptuousness of Fantaisie was now remembered without regret in the blaze of artificial light and in the artificial gratification of desires which art had alone created. After a magnificent repast, his host politely inquired of Popanilla whether he would like to go to the Opera, the comedy, or a concert, but the Fantaisian philosopher was not yet quite corrupted, and, still inspired with a desire to acquire useful knowledge, he begged his

landlord to procure him immediately a pamphlet on the Shell Question

While his host was engaged in procuring this luxury a man entered the room and told Popanilla that he had walked that day two thousand five hundred paces and that the tax due to the Excise upon this promenade was fifty crowns. The Captain stared, and remarked to the excise-officer that he thought a man's paces were a strange article to tax. The excise-officer, with great civility, answered that no doubt at first sight it might appear rather strange, but that it was the only article left untaxed in Vraibleusia, that there was a slight deficiency in the last quarter's revenue, and that therefore the Government had no alternative, that it was a tax which did not press heavily upon the individual, because the Vraibleusians were of a sedentary habit; that, besides, it was an opinion every day more received among the best judges that the more a man was taxed the richer he ultimately would prove, and he concluded by saying that Popanilla need not make himself uneasy about these demands, because, if he were ruined to-morrow, being a foreigner, he was entitled by the law of the land to five thousand a year, whereas he, the exciseman, being a native-born Vraibleusian, had no claims whatever upon the Government; therefore he hoped his honour would give him something to drink.

His host now entered with the 'Novum Organon' of the great Periwinkle. While Popanilla devoured the lively pages of this treatise, he discovered that the system which had been so subtly introduced by the Government, and which had so surprised him in the morning, had soon been adopted in private life, and although it was drowning matter to pick up pink shells, still there was nothing to prevent the whole commerce of the country from being carried on by means of a system equally conchological. He found that the social action in every part of the island was regulated and assisted by this process. Oyster-shells were

first introduced, muscle-shells speedily followed; and, as commerce became more complicate, they had even been obliged to have recourse to snail-shells. Popanilla retired to rest with admiration of the people who thus converted to the most useful purposes things apparently so useless. There was no saying now what might not be done even with a nutshell. It was evident that the nation who contrived to be the richest people in the world while they were over head and ears in debt must be fast approaching to a state of perfection. Finally, sinking to sleep in a bed of eiderdown, Popanilla was confirmed in his prejudices against a state of nature.

Chapter VIII

Skindeep called upon Popanilla on the following morning in an elegant equipage, and with great politeness proposed to attend him in a drive about the city.

The island of Vraibleusia is one hundred and fifty miles in circumference, two-thirds of which are covered by the city of Hubbabub. It contains no other city, town, or village. The rest of the island consists of rivers, canals, and railroads. Popanilla was surprised when he was informed that Hubbabub did not contain more than five millions of inhabitants, but his surprise was decreased when their journey occasionally lay through tracts of streets, consisting often of capacious mansions entirely tenantless. On seeking an explanation of this seeming desolation, he was told that the Hubbabubians were possessed by a frenzy of always moving westward; and that consequently great quarters of the city are perpetually deserted. Even as Skindeep was speaking their passage was stopped by a large caravan of carriages and waggons heavily laden with human creatures and their children and chattels. On Skindeep inquiring the cause of this great

movement, he was informed by one on horsback, who seemed to be the leader of the horde, that they were the late dwellers in sundry squares and streets situated far to the east, that their houses having been ridiculed by an itinerant ballad-singer, the female part of the tribe had insisted upon immediately quitting their unfashionable fatherland, and that now, after three days' journey, they had succeeded in reaching the late settlement of a horde who had migrated to the extreme west

Quitting regions so subject to revolutions and vicissitudes, the travellers once more emerged into quarters of a less transitory reputation, and in the magnificent parks, the broad streets, the ample squares, the palaces, the triumphal arches, and the theatres of occidental Hubblebub, Popanilla lost those sad and mournful feelings which are ever engendered by contemplating the gloomy relics of departed greatness. It was impossible to admire too much the architecture of this part of the city. The elevations were indeed imposing. In general the massy Egyptian appropriately graced the attic-stories, while the finer and more elaborate architecture of Corinth was placed on a level with the eye, so that its beauties might be more easily discovered. Spacious colonnades were flanked by porticos, surmounted by domes, nor was the number of columns at all limited, for you occasionally met with porticos of two tiers, the lower one of which consisted of three, the higher one of thirty columns. Pedestals of the purest Ionic Gothic were ingeniously intermixed with Palladian pediments, and the surging spire exquisitely harmonised with the horizontal architecture of the ancients. But perhaps, after all, the most charming effect was produced by the pyramids, surmounted by weatherecks.

Popanilla was particularly pleased by some chimneys of Caryatides, and did not for a moment hesitate in assenting to the assertion of Skindeep that the Vraibleusians were the most architectural nation in the world. True it was,

they had begun late, their attention as a people having been, for a considerable time, attracted to much more important affairs, but they had compensated for their tardy attention by their speedy excellence.*

Before they returned home Skindeep led Popanilla to the top of a tower, from whence they had a complete view of the whole island. Skindeep particularly directed the Captain's attention to one spot, where flourished, as he said, the only corn-fields in the country, which supplied the whole nation, and were the property of one individual. So unrivalled was his agricultural science that the vulgar only accounted for his admirable produce by a miraculous fecundity! The proprietor of these hundred golden acres was a rather mysterious sort of personage. He was an aboriginal inhabitant, and, though the only one of the aborigines in existence, had lived many centuries, and, to the consternation of some of the Vraibleusians and the exultation of others, exhibited no signs of decay. This awful being was without a name. When spoken of by his admirers he was generally described by such panegyrical periphrases as 'soul of the country,' 'foundation of the State,' 'the only real, and true, and substantial being', while, on the other hand, those who presumed to differ from those sentiments were in the habit of styling him 'the dead weight,' 'the vampire,' 'the night-mare,' and other titles equally complimentary. They also maintained that, instead of being either real or substantial, he was, in fact, the most flimsy and fictitious personage in the whole island, and then, lashing themselves up into metaphor, they would call him a meteor, or a vapour, or a great windy bubble, that would some day burst.

The Aboriginal insisted that it was the common law of the land that the islanders should purchase their corn only

* See a work which will be shortly published, entitled, 'The difference detected between *Architecture* and *Parchitecture*, by Sansovino the Second'

of him. They grumbled, but he growled, he swore that it was the constitution of the country, that there was an uninterrupted line of precedents to confirm the claim, and that, if they did not approve of the arrangement, they and their fathers should not have elected to have settled, or presumed to have been spawned, upon his island. Then, as if he were not desirous of resting his claim on its mere legal merits, he would remind them of the superiority of his grain, and the impossibility of a scarcity, in the event of which calamity an insular people could always find a plentiful though temporary resource in sea-weed. He then clearly proved to them that, if ever they had the imprudence to change any of their old laws, they would necessarily never have more than one meal a day as long as they lived. Finally, he recalled to their recollection that he had made the island what it was, that he was their mainstay, and that his counsel and exertions had rendered them the wonder of the world. Thus, between force, and fear, and flattery, the Vraibleusians paid for their corn nearly its weight in gold, but what did that signify to a nation with so many pink shells!

Chapter IX

The third day after his drive with his friend Skindeep, Popanilla was waited upon by the most eminent bookseller in Hubbabub, who begged to have the honour of introducing to the public a Narrative of Captain Popanilla's Voyage. This gentleman assured Popanilla that the Vraibleusian public were nervously alive to anything connected with discovery, that so ardent was their attachment to science and natural philosophy that voyages and travels were sure to be read with eagerness, particularly if they had coloured plates. Popanilla was charmed with the proposition, but blushinglly informed the mercantile

Mæenas that he did not know how to write. The publisher told him that this circumstance was not of the slightest importance; that he had never for a moment supposed that so sublime a savage could possess such a vulgar accomplishment; and that it was by no means difficult for a man to publish his travels without writing a line of them

Popanilla having consented to become an author upon these terms, the publisher asked him to dine with him, and introduced him to an intelligent individual. This intelligent individual listened attentively to all Popanilla's adventures. The Captain concealed nothing. He began with the eternal lock of hair, and showed how wonderfully this world was constituted, that even the loss of a thing was not useless; from which it was clear that Utility was Providence. After drinking some capital wine, the intelligent individual told Popanilla that he was wrong in supposing Fantaisie to be an island; that, on the contrary, it was a great continent, that this was proved by the probable action of the tides in the part of the island which had not yet been visited, that the consequence of these tides would be that, in the course of a season or two, Fantaisie would become a great receptacle for icebergs, and be turned into the North Pole; that, therefore, the seasons throughout the world would be changed; that this year, in Vraibleusia, the usual winter would be omitted, and that when the present summer was finished the dog-days would again commence. Popanilla took his leave highly delighted with this intelligent individual and with the bookseller's wine

Owing to the competition which existed between the publishers, the printers, and the engravers of the city of Hubbabub, and the great exertions of the intelligent individual, the Narrative of Captain Popanilla's Voyage was brought out in less than a week, and was immediately in everybody's hand. The work contained a detailed

account of everything which took place during the whole of the three days, and formed a quarto volume. The plates were numerous and highly interesting. There was a line engraving of Alligator Mountain and a mezzotint of Seaweed Island, a view of the canoe N.E.; a view of the canoe N.W., a view of the canoe S.E., a view of the canoe S.W. There were highly-finished coloured drawings of the dried fish and the bread-fruit, and an exquisitely tinted representation of the latter in a mouldy state. But the *chef-d'œuvre* was the portrait of the author himself. He was represented trampling on the body of a boa-constrictor of the first quality, in the skin of which he was dressed, at his back were his bows and arrows, his right hand rested on an uprooted pine-tree, he stood in a desert between two volcanoes, at his feet was a lake of magnitude; the distance lowered with an approaching tornado, but a lucky flash of lightning revealed the range of the Andes and both oceans. Altogether he looked the most dandified of savages, and the most savage of dandies. It was a sublime lithograph, and produced scarcely less important effects upon Popanilla's fortune than that lucky 'lock of hair', for no sooner was the portrait published than Popanilla received a ticket for the receptions of a lady of quality. On showing it to Skindeep, he was told that the honour was immense, and therefore he must go by all means. Skindeep regretted that he could not accompany him, but he was engaged to a lecture on shoemaking, and a lecture was a thing he made it a point never to miss, because, as he very properly observed, 'By lectures you may become extremely well informed without any of the inconveniences of study. No fixity of attention, no continuity of meditation, no habits of reflection, no aptitude of combination, are the least requisite, all which things only give you a nervous headache; and yet you gain all the results of all these processes. True it is that that which is so easily acquired is not always so easily remembered, but what of

that ? Suppose you forget any subject, why then you go to another lecture.' 'Very true !' said Popanilla.

Popanilla failed not to remember his invitation from Lady Spirituelle, and at the proper hour his announcement produced a sensation throughout her crowded saloons. Spirituelle was a most enchanting lady ; she asked Popanilla how tall he really was, and whether the women in Fantaisie were as handsome as the men. Then she said that the Vraibleusians were the most intellectual and the most scientific nation in the world, and that the society at her house was the most intellectual and the most scientific in Vraibleusia. She told him also that she had hoped by this season the world would have been completely regulated by mind, but that the subversion of matter was a more substantial business than she and the Committee of Management had imagined : she had no doubt, however, that in a short time mind must carry the day, because matter was mortal and mind eternal ; therefore mind had the best chance. Finally, she also told him that the passions were the occasion of all the misery which had ever existed, and that it was impossible for mankind either to be happy or great until, like herself and her friends, they were 'all soul.'

Popanilla was charmed with his company. What a difference between the calm, smiling, easy, uninteresting, stupid, sunset countenances of Fantaisie and those around him. All looked so interested and so intelligent, their eyes were so anxious, their gestures so animated, their manners so earnest. They must be very clever ! He drew nearer. If before he were charmed, now he was enchanted. What an universal acquisition of useful knowledge ! Three or four dukes were earnestly imbibing a new theory of gas from a brilliant little gentleman in black, who looked like a Will-o'-the-wisp. The Prime Minister was anxious about pin-making ; a Bishop equally interested in a dissertation on the escapements of watches, a Field-Marshal not less

intent on a new specific from the concentrated essence of hellebore. But what most delighted Popanilla was hearing a lecture from the most eminent lawyer and statesman in Vraibleusia on his first and favourite study of hydrostatics. His associations quite overcame him. all Fantaisie rushed upon his memory, and he was obliged to retire to a less frequented part of the room to relieve his too excited feelings.

He was in a few minutes addressed by the identical little gentleman who had recently been speculating with the three dukes

The little gentleman told him that he had heard with great pleasure that in Fantaisie they had no historians, poets, or novelists. He proved to Popanilla that no such thing as experience existed, that, as the world was now to be regulated on quite different principles from those by which it had hitherto been conducted, similar events to those which had occurred could never again take place, and therefore it was absolutely useless to know anything about the past. With regard to literary fiction, he explained that, as it was absolutely necessary, from his nature, that man should experience a certain quantity of excitement, the false interest which these productions created prevented their readers from obtaining this excitement by methods which, by the discovery of the useful, might greatly benefit society.

‘You are of opinion, then,’ exclaimed the delighted Popanilla, ‘that nothing is good which is not useful?’

‘Is it possible that an individual exists in this world who doubts this great first principle?’ said the little man, with great animation.

‘Ah, my dear friend!’ said Popanilla, ‘if you only knew what an avowal of this great first principle has cost me; what I have suffered, what I have lost!’

‘What have you lost?’ asked the little gentleman.

‘In the first place, a lock of hair.’

‘Poh, nonsense!’

‘ Ah ! you may say Poh ! but it was a particular lock of hair.’

‘ My friend, that word is odious. Nothing is *particular*, everything is *general*. Rules are general, feelings are general, and properly should be general ; and, sir, I tell you what, in a very short time it must be so Why should Lady Spirituelle, for instance, receive me at her house, rather than I receive her at mine ? ’

‘ Why don’t you, then ? ’ asked the simple Popanilla

‘ Because I have not got one, sir ! ’ roared the little gentleman.

He would certainly have broken away had not Popanilla begged him to answer one question The Captain, reiterating in the most solemn manner his firm belief in the dogma that nothing was good which was not useful, and again detailing the persecutions which this conviction had brought upon him, was delighted that an opportunity was now afforded to gain from the lips of a distinguished philosopher a definition of what *utility* really was. The distinguished philosopher could not refuse so trifling a favour.

‘ Utility,’ said he, ‘ is ’

At this critical moment there was a universal buzz throughout the rooms, and everybody looked so interested that the philosopher quite forgot to finish his answer. On inquiring the cause of this great sensation, Popanilla was informed that a rumour was about that a new element had been discovered that afternoon. The party speedily broke up, the principal philosophers immediately rushing to their clubs to ascertain the truth of this report Popanilla was unfashionable enough to make his acknowledgments to his hostess before he left her house. As he gazed upon her ladyship’s brilliant eyes and radiant complexion, he felt convinced of the truth of her theory of the passions, he could not refrain from pressing her hand in a manner which violated etiquette, and which a nativity in the Indian Ocean could alone excuse, the pressure was graciously returned.

As Popanilla descended the staircase, he discovered a little note of pink satin paper entangled in his ruffle. He opened it with curiosity. It was 'All soul'. He did not return to his hotel quite so soon as he expected.

Chapter X

Popanilla breakfasted rather late the next morning and on looking over the evening papers, which were just published, his eyes lighted on the following paragraph.

'Arrived yesterday at the Hôtel Diplomatique. His Excellency Prince Popanilla, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the newly-recognised State of Fantaisie.'

Before his Excellency could either recover from his astonishment or make any inquiries which might throw any illustration upon its cause, a loud shout in the street made him naturally look out of the window. He observed three or four magnificent equipages drawing up at the door of the hotel, and followed by a large crowd. Each carriage was drawn by four horses and attended by footmen so radiant with gold and scarlet that, had Popanilla been the late ingenious Mr Keates he would have mistaken them for the natural children of Phœbus and Aurora. The Ambassador forgot the irregularity of the paragraph in the splendour of the liveries. He felt triumphantly conscious that the most beautiful rose in the world must look extremely pale by the side of scarlet cloth, and this new example of the superiority of art over nature reminding him of the inferiority of bread-fruit to grilled muffin, he resolved to return to breakfast.

But it was his fate to be reminded of the utility of the best resolutions, for ere the cup of coffee had touched his parched lips the door of his room flew open, and the Marquess of Moustache was announced.

His Lordship was a young gentleman with an expressive countenance, that is to say, his face was so covered with hair, and the back of his head cropped so bald, that you generally addressed him in the rear by mistake. He did not speak, but continued bowing for a considerable time, in that diplomatic manner which means so much. By the time he had finished bowing his suite had gained the apartment, and his Private Secretary, one of those uncommonly able men who only want an opportunity, seized the present one of addressing Popanilla.

Bowing to the late Captain with studied respect, he informed him that the Marquess Moustache was the nobleman appointed by the Government of Vraibleusia to attend upon his Excellency during the first few weeks of his mission, with the view of affording him all the information upon those objects which might naturally be expected to engage the interest or attract the attention of so distinguished a personage. The 'ancien marin' and present Ambassador had been so used to miracles since the loss of that lock of hair, that he did not think it supernatural, having during the last few days been in turn a Fantaisian nobleman, a post-captain, a fish, a goddess, and, above all, an author, he should now be transformed into a plenipotentiary. Drinking, therefore, his cup of coffee, he assumed an air as if he really were used to have a Marquess for an attendant, and said that he was at his Lordship's service.

The Marquess bowed low, and the Private Secretary remarked that the first thing to be done by his Excellency was to be presented to the Government. After that he was to visit all the manufactories in Vraibleusia, subscribe to all the charities, and dine with all the Corporations, attend a *déjeuner à la fourchette* at a palace they were at present building under the sea, give a gold plate to be run for on the fashionable racecourse, be present at morning prayers at the Government Chapel, hunt once or twice,

give a dinner or two himself, make one pun, and go to the Play, by which various means, he said, the good understanding between the two countries would be materially increased and, in a manner, established

As the Fantaisian Ambassador and his suite entered their carriages, the sky, if it had not been for the smoke, would certainly have been rent by the acclamations of the mob. 'Popanilla for ever!' sounded from all quarters, except where the shout was varied by 'Vraibleusia and Fantaisie against the world!' which perhaps was even the most popular sentiment of the two. The Ambassador was quite agitated, and asked the Marquess what he was to do. The Private Secretary told his Excellency to bow. Popanilla bowed with such grace that in five minutes the horses were taken out of his carriage, and that carriage dragged in triumph by the enthusiastic populace. He continued bowing, and their enthusiasm continued increasing. In the meantime his Excellency's portrait was sketched by an artist who hung upon his wheel, and in less than half an hour a lithographic likeness of the popular idol was worshipped in every print-shop in Hubbabub.

As they drew nearer the Hall of Audience the crowd kept increasing, till at length the whole city seemed poured forth to meet him. Although now feeling conscious that he was the greatest man in the island, and therefore only thinking of himself, Popanilla's attention was nevertheless at this moment attracted by a singular figure. He was apparently a man: in stature a Patagonian, and robust as a well-fed ogre. His countenance was jolly, but consequential, and his costume a curious mixture of a hunting-dress and a court suit. He was on foot, and in spite of the crowd, with the aid of a good whip and his left fist made his way with great ease. On inquiring who this extraordinary personage might be, Popanilla was informed that it was THE ABORIGINAL INHABITANT. As the giant passed the Ambassador's carriages, the whole suite, even

Lord Moustache, rose and bent low ; and the Secretary told Popanilla that there was no person in the island for whom the Government of Vraibleusia entertained so profound a respect

The crowd was now so immense that even the progress of the Aboriginal Inhabitant was for a moment impeded. The great man got surrounded by a large body of little mechanics. The contrast between the pale perspiring visages and lean forms of these emaciated and half-generated creatures, and the jolly form and ruddy countenance, gigantic limbs and ample frame, of the Aboriginal, was most striking, nor could any one view the group for an instant without feeling convinced that the latter was really a superior existence. The mechanics, who were worn by labour, not reduced by famine, far from being miserable were impudent. They began rating the mighty one for the dearness of his corn. He received their attacks with mildness. He reminded them that the regulation by which they procured their bread was the aboriginal law of the island, under which they had all so greatly flourished. He explained to them that it was owing to this protecting principle that he and his ancestors, having nothing to do but to hunt and shoot, had so preserved their health that, unlike the rest of the human race, they had not degenerated from the original form and nature of man. He showed that it was owing to the vigour of mind and body consequent upon this fine health that Vraibleusia had become the wonder of the world, and that they themselves were so actively employed ; and he inferred that they surely could not grudge him the income which he derived, since that income was, in fact, the foundation of their own profits. He then satisfactorily demonstrated to them that if by any circumstances he were to cease to exist, the whole island would immediately sink under the sea. Having thus condescended to hold a little parley with his fellow-subjects, though not fellow-creatures, he gave them all a good sound

flogging, and departed amidst the enthusiastic cheering of those whom he had so briskly lashed.

By this time Popanilla had arrived at the Hall of Audience.

It was a vast and venerable pile.

His Excellency and suite quitted their carriages amidst the renewed acclamations of the mob. Proceeding through a number of courts and quadrangles, crowded with guards and officials, they stopped before a bronze gate of great height. Over it was written, in vast characters of living flame, this inscription :

TO
THE WISEST AND THE BEST,
THE RICHEST AND THE MIGHTIEST,
THE GLORY AND THE ADMIRATION,
THE DEFENCE AND THE CONSTERNATION.

On reading this mysterious inscription his Excellency experienced a sudden and awful shudder. Lord Moustache, however, who was more used to mysteries, taking up a silver trumpet, which was fixed to the portal by a crimson cord, gave a loud blast. The gates flew open with the sound of a whirlwind, and Popanilla found himself in what at first appeared an illimitable hall. It was crowded, but perfect order was preserved. The Ambassador was conducted with great pomp to the upper end of the apartment, where, after an hour's walk, his Excellency arrived. At the extremity of the hall was a colossal and metallic Statue of extraordinary appearance. It represented an armed monarch. The head and bust were of gold, and the curling hair was crowned with an imperial diadem, the body and arms were of silver, worked in the semblance of a complete suit of enamelled armour of the feudal ages, and the thighs and legs were of iron, which the artist had clothed in the bandaged hose of the old Saxons. The figure bore the

appearance of great antiquity, but had evidently been often repaired and renovated since its first formation. The workmanship was clearly of different eras, and the reparations, either from ignorance or intention, had often been effected with little deference to the original design. Part of the shoulders had been supplied by the other, though less precious, metal, and the Roman and Imperial ornaments had unaccountably been succeeded by the less classic, though more picturesque, decorations of Gothic armour. On the other hand, a great portion of the chivalric and precious material of the body had been removed, and replaced by a style and substance resembling those of the lower limbs. In its right hand the Statue brandished a naked sword, and with its left leant upon a huge, though extremely rich and elaborately carved, crosier. It trampled upon a shivered lance and a broken chain.

‘Your Excellency perceives,’ said the Secretary, pointing to the Statue, ‘that ours is a mixed Government.’

Popanilla was informed that this extraordinary Statue enjoyed all the faculties of an intellectual being, with the additional advantage of some faculties which intellectual beings do not enjoy. It possessed not only the faculty of speech, but of speaking truth, not only the power of judgment, but of judging rightly, not only the habit of listening, but of listening attentively. Its antiquity was so remote that the most profound and acute antiquarians had failed in tracing back its origin. The Aboriginal Inhabitant, however, asserted that it was the work of one of his ancestors, and as his assertion was confirmed by all traditions, the allegation was received. Whatever might have been its origin, certain it was that it was now immortal, for it could never die, and to whomsoever it might have been originally indebted for its power, not less sure was it that it was now omnipotent, for it could do all things. Thus alleged and thus believed the Vraibleusians, marvellous and sublime people ! who, with all the impotence of

mortality, have created a Government which is both immortal and omnipotent !

Generally speaking, the Statue was held in great reverence and viewed with great admiration by the whole Vraibleusian people. There were a few persons, indeed, who asserted that the creation of such a Statue was by no means so mighty a business as it had been the fashion to suppose ; and that it was more than probable that, with the advantages afforded by the scientific discoveries of modern times, they would succeed in making a more useful one. This, indeed, they offered to accomplish, provided the present Statue were preliminarily destroyed, but as they were well assured that this offer would never be accepted, it was generally treated by those who refused it as a braggadocio. There were many also who, though they in general greatly admired and respected the present Statue, affected to believe that, though the execution was wonderful, and the interior machinery indeed far beyond the powers of the present age, nevertheless the design was in many parts somewhat rude, and the figure altogether far from being well-proportioned. Some thought the head too big, some too small, some that the body was disproportionately little ; others, on the contrary, that it was so much too large that it had the appearance of being dropsical, others maintained that the legs were too weak for the support of the whole, and that they should be rendered more important and prominent members of the figure, while, on the contrary, there were yet others who cried out that really these members were already so extravagantly huge, so coarse, and so ungenteel, that they quite marred the general effect of a beautiful piece of sculpture.

The same differences existed about the comparative excellence of the three metals and the portions of the body which they respectively formed. Some admired the gold, and maintained that if it were not for the head the Statue would be utterly useless ; others preferred the silver,

and would assert that the body, which contained all the machinery, must clearly be the most precious portion ; while a third party triumphantly argued that the iron legs which supported both body and head must surely be the most valuable part, since without them the Statue must fall. The first party advised that in all future reparations gold only should be introduced ; and the other parties, of course, recommended with equal zeal their own favourite metals. It is observable, however, that if, under these circumstances, the iron race chanced to fail in carrying their point, they invariably voted for gold in preference to silver. But the most contradictory opinions, perhaps, were those which were occasioned by the instruments with which the Statue was armed and supported. Some affected to be so frightened by the mere sight of the brandished sword, although it never moved, that they pretended it was dangerous to live even under the same sky with it ; while others, treating very lightly the terrors of this warlike instrument, would observe that much more was really to be apprehended from the remarkable strength and thickness of the calm and peace-inspiring crozier, and that as long as the Government was supported by this huge pastoral staff, nothing could prevail against it, that it could dare all things, and even stand without the help of its legs. All these various opinions at least proved that, although the present might not be the most miraculous Statue that could possibly be created, it was nevertheless quite impossible ever to form one which would please all parties.

The care of this wonderful Statue was entrusted to twelve ‘Managers,’ whose duty it was to wind-up and regulate its complicated machinery, and who answered for its good management by their heads. It was their business to consult the oracle upon all occasions, and by its decisions to administer and regulate all the affairs of the State. They alone were permitted to hear its voice, for the Statue never spoke in public save on rare occasions, and

its sentences were then really so extremely commonplace that, had it not been for the deep wisdom of its general conduct, the Vraibleusians would have been almost tempted to believe that they really might exist without the services of the capital member. The twelve Managers surrounded the Statue at a respectful distance; their posts were the most distinguished in the State, and indeed the duties attached to them were so numerous, so difficult, and so responsible, that it required no ordinary abilities to fulfil, and demanded no ordinary courage to aspire to them.

The Fantaisian Ambassador, having been presented, took his place on the right hand of the Statue, next to the Aboriginal Inhabitant, and public business then commenced.

There came forward a messenger, who, knocking his nose three times with great reverence on the floor, a knock for each metal of the figure, thus spoke

‘O thou wisest and best! thou richest and mightiest! thou glory and admiration! thou defence and consternation! Lo! the King of the North is cutting all his subjects’ heads off!’

This announcement produced a great sensation. The Marquess Moustache took snuff, the Private Secretary said he had long suspected that this would be the case, and the Aboriginal Inhabitant remarked to Popanilla that the corn in the North was of an exceedingly coarse grain. While they were making these observations the twelve Managers had assembled in deep consultation around the Statue, and in a very few minutes the Oracle was prepared. The answer was very simple, but the exordium was sublime. It professed that the Vraibleusian nation was the saviour and champion of the world, that it was the first principle of its policy to maintain the cause of any people struggling for their rights as men, and it avowed itself to be the grand patron of civil and religious liberty in all quarters of the globe. Forty-seven battalions of infantry and eighteen regiments of cavalry, twenty-four sail of the line,

seventy transports, and fifteen bomb-ketches, were then ordered to leave Vraibleusia for the North in less than sixty minutes !

‘What energy !’ said Popanilla ; ‘what decision ! what rapidity of execution !’

‘Ay !’ said the Aboriginal, smacking his thigh, ‘let them say what they like about their proportions, and mixtures, and metals abstract nonsense ! No one can deny that our Government works well. But see ! here comes another messenger !’

‘O thou wisest and best ! thou richest and mightiest ! thou glory and admiration ! thou defence and consternation ! Lo ! the people of the South have cut their king’s head off !’

‘Well ! I suppose that is exactly what you all want.’ said the innocent Popanilla.

The Private Secretary looked mysterious, and said that he was not prepared to answer . that his department never having been connected with this species of business, he was unable at the moment to give his Excellency the requisite information. At the same time, he begged to state that, provided anything he said should not commit him, he had no objection to answer the question hypothetically The Aboriginal Inhabitant said that he would have no hypotheses or Jacobins ; that he did not approve of cutting off kings’ heads , and that the Vraibleusians were the most monarchical people in the world. So saying, he walked up, without any ceremony, to the chief Manager, and taking him by the button, conversed with him some time in an earnest manner, which made the stocks fall two per cent

The Statue ordered three divisions of the grand army and a battering-train of the first grade off to the South, without the loss of a second A palace and establishment were immediately directed to be prepared for the family of the murdered monarch, and the commander-in-chief was instructed to make every exertion to bring home the body

of his Majesty embalmed. Such an immense issue of pink shells was occasioned by this last expedition that stocks not only recovered themselves, but rose considerably.

The excitement occasioned by this last announcement evaporated at the sight of a third messenger. He informed the Statue that the Emperor of the East was unfortunately unable to pay the interest upon his national debt; that his treasury was quite empty and his resources utterly exhausted. He requested the assistance of the most wealthy and the most generous of nations, and he offered them as security for their advances his gold and silver mines, which, for the breadth of their veins and the richness of their ores, he said, were unequalled. He added, that the only reason they were unworked was the exquisite flavour of the water-melons in his empire, which was so delicious that his subjects of all classes, passing their whole day in devouring them, could be induced neither by force nor persuasion to do anything else. The cause was so reasonable, and the security so satisfactory, that the Vraibleusian Government felt themselves authorised in shipping off immediately all the gold in the island. Pink shells abounded, and stocks were still higher.

‘You have no mines in Vraibleusia, I believe?’ said Popanilla to the Aboriginal

‘No!’ but we have taxes’

‘Very true!’ said Popanilla

‘I understand that a messenger has just arrived from the West,’ said the Secretary to the Fantaisian Plenipotentiary

‘He must bring interesting intelligence from such interesting countries. Next to ourselves, they are evidently the most happy, the most wealthy, the most enlightened, and the most powerful Governments in the world. Although founded only last week, they already rank in the first class of nations. I will send you a little pamphlet to-morrow, which I have just published upon this subject, in which you will see that I have combated, I trust not unsuccessfully,

the ridiculous opinions of those cautious statesmen who insinuate that the stability of these Governments is even yet questionable.'

The messenger from the Republics of the West now prostrated himself before the Statue. He informed it that two parties had, unfortunately, broken out in these countries, and threatened their speedy dissolution, that one party maintained that all human government originated in the *wants* of man, while the other party asserted that it originated in the *desires* of man. That these factions had become so violent and so universal that public business was altogether stopped, trade quite extinct, and the instalments due to Vraibleusia not forthcoming. Finally, he entreated the wisest and the best of nations to send to these distracted lands some discreet and trusty personages, well instructed in the first principles of government, in order that they might draw up constitutions for the ignorant and irritated multitude.

The Private Secretary told Popanilla that this was no more than he had long expected, that all this would subside, and that he should publish a postscript to his pamphlet in a few days, which he begged to dedicate to him.

A whole corps diplomatique and another shipful of abstract philosophers, principally Scotchmen, were immediately ordered off to the West, and shortly after, to render their first principles still more effective and their administrative arrangements still more influential, some brigades of infantry and a detachment of the guards followed. Free constitutions are apt to be misunderstood until half of the nation are bayoneted and the rest imprisoned.

As this mighty Vraibleusian nation had, within the last half-hour, received intelligence from all quarters of the globe, and interfered in all possible affairs, civil and military, abstract, administrative, diplomatic, and financial, Popanilla supposed that the assembly would now break up. Some petty business, however, remained. War was declared

against the King of Sneezland, for presuming to buy pocket-handkerchiefs of another nation, and the Emperor of Pastilles was threatened with a bombardment for daring to sell his peppers to another people. There were also some dozen commercial treaties to be signed, or canvassed, or cancelled, and a report having got about that there was a rumour that some disturbance had broken out in some parts unknown, a flying expedition was despatched, with sealed orders, to circumnavigate the globe and arrange affairs. By this time Popanilla thoroughly understood the meaning of the mysterious inscription.

Just as the assembly was about to be dissolved another messenger, who, in his agitation, even forgot the accustomed etiquette of salutation, rushed into the presence.

‘O most mighty!’ Sir Bombastes Furioso, who commanded our last expedition, having sailed, in the hurry, with wrong orders, has attacked our ancient ally by mistake, and utterly destroyed him!’

Here was a pretty business for the Best and Wisest! At first the Managers behaved in a manner the most undiplomatic, and quite lost their temper. they raved, they stormed, they contradicted each other, they contradicted themselves, and swore that Sir Bombastes’ head should answer for it. Then they subsided into sulkiness, and at length, beginning to suspect that the fault might ultimately attach only to themselves, they got frightened, and held frequent consultations with pale visages and quivering lips. After some time they thought they could do nothing wiser than put a good face upon the affair, whatever might be the result, it was, at any rate, a victory, and a victory would please the vainest of nations. and so these blundering and blustering gentlemen determined to adopt the conqueror, whom they were at first weak enough to disclaim, then vile enough to bully, and finally forced to reward. The Statue accordingly whispered a most elaborate panegyric on Furioso, which was of course duly

delivered The Admiral, who was neither a coward nor a fool, was made ridiculous by being described as the greatest commander that ever existed, one whom Nature in a gracious freak, had made to shame us little men, a happy compound of the piety of Noah, the patriotism of Themistocles, the skill of Columbus, and the courage of Nelson; and his exploit styled the most glorious and unrivalled victory that was ever achieved, even by the Vraibleusians! Honours were decreed in profusion, a general illumination ordered for the next twenty nights, and an expedition immediately despatched to attack the right man.

All this time the conquerors were in waiting in an ante-room, in great trepidation, and fully prepared to be cashiered or cut in quarters. They were rather surprised when, bowing to the ground, they were saluted by some half-dozen lords-in-waiting as the heroes of the age, congratulated upon their famous achievements, and humbly requested to appear in the Presence

The warriors accordingly walked up in procession to the Statue, who, opening its mighty mouth, vomited forth a flood of ribbons, stars, and crosses, which were divided among the valiant band. This oral discharge the Vraibleusians called the 'fountain of honour.'

Scarcely had the mighty Furioso and his crew disappeared than a body of individuals arrived at the top of the hall, and, placing themselves opposite the Managers, began rating them for their inefficient administration of the island, and expatiated on the inconsistency of their late conduct to the conquering Bombastes. The Managers defended themselves in a manner perfectly in character with their recent behaviour, but their opponents were not easily satisfied with their confused explanations and their explained confusions, and the speeches on both sides grew warmer. At length the opposition proceeded to expel the administration from their places by force, and

an eager scuffle between the two parties now commenced. The general body of spectators continued only to observe, and did not participate in the fray. At first, this *mêlée* only excited amusement, but as it lengthened some wisely observed that public business greatly suffered by these private squabbles, and some even ventured to imagine that the safety of the Statue might be implicated by their continuance. But this last fear was futile.

Popanilla asked the Private Secretary which party he thought would ultimately succeed. The Private Secretary said that, if the present Managers retained their places, he thought that they would not go out, but if, on the other hand, they were expelled by the present opposition, it was probable that the present opposition would become Managers. The Aboriginal thought both parties equally incompetent, and told Popanilla some long stories about a person who was chief Manager in his youth, about five hundred years ago, to whom he said he was indebted for all his political principles, which did not surprise Popanilla.

At this moment a noise was heard throughout the hall which made his Excellency believe that something untoward had again happened, and that another conqueror by mistake had again arrived. A most wonderful being galloped up to the top of the apartment. It was half man and half horse. The Secretary told Popanilla that this was the famous Centaur Chiron; that his Horseship, having wearied of his ardent locality in the constellations, had descended some years back to the island of Vraibleusia, that he had commanded the armies of the nation in all the great wars, and had gained every battle in which he had ever been engaged. Chiron was no less skilful, he said, in civil than in military affairs, but the Vraibleusians, being very jealous of allowing themselves to be governed by their warriors, the Centaur had lately been out of employ. While the Secretary was giving him this information Popanilla

perceived that the great Chiron was attacking the combatants on both sides. The tutor of Achilles, Hercules, and Æneas, of course, soon succeeded in kicking them all out, and constituted himself chief and sole Manager of the Statue. Some grumbled at this autocratic conduct 'upon principle,' but they were chiefly connections of the expelled. The great majority, wearied with public squabbles occasioned by private ends, rejoiced to see the public interest entrusted to an individual who had a reputation to lose. Intelligence of the appointment of the Centaur was speedily diffused throughout the island, and produced great and general satisfaction. There were a few, indeed, impartial personages, who had no great taste for Centaurs in civil capacities, from an apprehension that, if he could not succeed in persuading them by his eloquence, his Grace might chance to use his heels.

Chapter XI

On the evening of his presentation day his Excellency the Fantaisian Ambassador and suite honoured the national theatre with their presence. Such a house was never known! The pit was miraculously overflowed before the doors were opened, although the proprietor did not permit a single private entrance. The enthusiasm was universal, and only twelve persons were killed. The Private Secretary told Popanilla, with an air of great complacency, that the Vraibleusian theatres were the largest in the world. Popanilla had little doubt of the truth of this information, as a long time elapsed before he could even discover the stage. He observed that every person in the theatre carried a long black glass, which he kept perpetually fixed to his eye. To sit in a huge room hotter than a glass-house, in a posture emulating the most sanctified Faquir, with a throbbing head-ache, a breaking back, and twisted legs, with a heavy tube held over one eye, and the other covered

with the unemployed hand, is in Vraibleusia called a public amusement

The play was by the most famous dramatist that Vraibleusia ever produced, and certainly, when his Excellency witnessed the first scenes, it was easier to imagine that he was once more in his own sunset Isle of Fantaisie than in the railroad state of Vraibleusia. but, unfortunately, this evening the principal characters and scenes were omitted, to make room for a moving panorama, which lasted some hours, of the chief and most recent Vraibleusian victories. The audience fought their battles o'er again with great fervour. During the play one of the inferior actors was supposed to have saluted a female chorus-singer with an ardour which was more than theatrical, and every lady in the house immediately fainted; because, as the eternal Secretary told Popanilla, the Vraibleusians are the most modest and most moral nation in the world. The male part of the audience insisted, in indignant terms, that the offending performer should immediately be dismissed. In a few minutes he appeared upon the stage to make a most humble apology for an offence which he was not conscious of having committed, but the most moral and the most modest of nations was implacable, and the wretch was expelled. Having a large family dependent upon his exertions, the actor, according to a custom prevalent in Vraibleusia, went immediately and drowned himself in the nearest river. Then the ballet commenced.

It was soon discovered that the chief dancer, a celebrated foreigner, who had been announced for this evening, was absent. The uproar was tremendous, and it was whispered that the house would be pulled down, because, as Popanilla was informed, the Vraibleusians are the most particular and the freest people in the world, and never will permit themselves to be treated with disrespect. The principal chandelier having been destroyed, the manager appeared, and regretted that Signor Zephyrino, being engaged to

dine with a Grandee of the first class, was unable to fulfil his engagement. The house became frantic, and the terrified manager sent immediately for the Signor. The artist, after a proper time had elapsed, appeared with a napkin round his neck and a fork in his hand, with which he stood some moments, until the uproar had subsided, picking his teeth. At length, when silence was obtained, he told them that he was surprised that the most polished and liberal nation in the world should behave themselves in such a brutal and narrow-minded manner. He threatened them that he would throw up his engagement immediately, and announce to all foreign parts that they were a horde of barbarians; then, abusing them for a few seconds in round terms, he retired, amidst the cheerings of the whole house, to finish his wine.

When the performances were finished the audience rose and joined in chorus. On Popanilla enquiring the name and nature of this effusion, he was told that it was the national air of the Isle of Fantaisie, sung in compliment to himself. His Excellency shrugged his shoulders and bowed low.

The next morning, attended by his suite, Popanilla visited the most considerable public offices and manufactories in Hubbabub. He was received in all places with the greatest distinction. He was invariably welcomed either by the chiefs of the department or the proprietors themselves, and a sumptuous collation was prepared for him in every place. His Excellency evinced the liveliest interest in everything that was pointed out to him, and instantaneously perceived that the Vraibleusians exceeded the rest of the world in manufactures and public works as much as they did in arms, morals, modesty, philosophy, and politics. The Private Secretary being absent upon his postscript, Popanilla received the most satisfactory information upon all subjects from the Marquess himself. Whenever he addressed any question to his Lordship, his noble attendant, with the

greatest politeness, begged him to take some refreshment Popanilla returned to his hotel with a great admiration of the manner in which refined philosophy in Vraibleusia was applied to the common purposes of life, and found that he had that morning acquired a general knowledge of the chief arts and sciences, eaten some hundred sandwiches, and tasted as many bottles of sherry.

Chapter XII

The most commercial nation in the world was now busily preparing to diffuse the blessings of civilisation and competition throughout the native country of their newly-acquired friend. The greatest exporters that ever existed had never been acquainted with such a subject for exportation as the Isle of Fantaisie. There everything was wanted. It was not a partial demand which was to be satisfied, nor a particular deficiency which was to be supplied, but a vast population was thoroughly to be furnished with every article which a vast population must require. From the manufacturer of steam-engines to the manufacturer of stockings, all were alike employed. There was no branch of trade in Vraibleusia which did not equally rejoice at this new opening for commercial enterprise, and which was not equally interested in this new theatre for Vraibleusian industry, Vraibleusian invention, Vraibleusian activity, and, above all, Vraibleusian competition.

Day and night the whole island was employed in preparing for the great fleet and in huzzaing Popanilla. When at home, every ten minutes he was obliged to appear in the balcony, and then, with hand on heart and hat in hand, ah! that bow! that perpetual motion of popularity! If a man love ease, let him be most unpopular. The Managers did the impossible to assist and advance the intercourse between the two nations. They behaved in a liberal

and enlightened manner, and a deputation of liberal and enlightened merchants consequently waited upon them with a vote of thanks. They issued so many pink shells that the price of the public funds was doubled, and affairs arranged so skilfully that money was universally declared to be worth nothing, so that every one in the island, from the Premier down to the Mendicant whom the lecture-loving Skindeep threatened with the bastinado, was enabled to participate, in some degree, in the approaching venture, if we should use so dubious a term in speaking of profits so certain.

Compared with the Fantaisian connection, the whole commerce of the world appeared to the Vraibleusians a retail business. All other customers were neglected or discarded, and each individual seemed to concentrate his resources to supply the wants of a country where they dance by moonlight, live on fruit, and sleep on flowers. At length the first fleet of five hundred sail, laden with wonderful specimens of Vraibleusian mechanism, and innumerable bales of Vraibleusian manufactures; articles raw and refined, goods dry and damp, wholesale and retail, silks and woollen cloths; cottons, cutlery, and camlets, flannels and ladies' albums; under-waistcoats, kid gloves, engravings, coats, cloaks, and ottomans, lamps and looking-glasses, sofas, round tables, equipages, and scent-bottles, fans and tissue-flowers, porcelain, poetry, novels, newspapers, and cookery books, bear's-grease, blue pills, and bijouterie, arms, beards, poodles, pages, mustachios, court-guides, and bon-bons; music, pictures, ladies' maids, scrap-books, buckles, boxing-gloves, guitars, and snuff-boxes, together with a company of opera-singers, a band of comedians, a popular preacher, some quacks, lecturers, artists, and literary gentlemen, principally sketch-book men, quitted, one day, with a favourable wind, and amid the exultation of the inhabitants, the port of Hubbabub!

When his Excellency Prince Popanilla heard of the

contents of this stupendous cargo, notwithstanding his implicit confidence in the superior genius and useful knowledge of the Vraibleusians, he could not refrain from expressing a doubt whether, in the present undeveloped state of his native land, any returns could be made proportionate to so curious and elaborate an importation ; but whenever he ventured to intimate his opinion to any of the most commercial nation in the world he was only listened to with an incredulous smile which seemed to pity his inexperience, or told, with an air of profound self-complacency, that in Fantaisie ‘ there must be great resources.’

In the meantime, public companies were formed for working the mines, colonising the waste lands, and cutting the coral rocks of the Indian Isle, of all which associations Popanilla was chosen Director by acclamation. These, however, it must be confessed, were speculations of a somewhat doubtful nature, but the Branch Bank Society of the Isle of Fantaisie really held out flattering prospects.

When the fleet had sailed they gave Popanilla a public dinner. It was attended by all the principal men in the island, and he made a speech, which was received in a rather different manner than was his sunset oration by the monarch whom he now represented. Fantaisie and its accomplished Envoy were at the same time the highest and the universal fashion. The ladies sang *à la Syrene*, dressed their hair *à la Mermede*, and themselves *à la Fantastique* ; which, by-the-bye, was not new, and the gentlemen wore boa-constrictor cravats and waltzed *à la mer Indienne* a title probably suggested by a remembrance of the dangers of the sea.

It was soon discovered that, without taking into consideration the average annual advantages which would necessarily spring from their new connection, the profits which must accrue upon the present expedition alone had already doubled the capital of the island. Everybody in

Vraibleusia had either made a fortune, or laid the foundation of one. The penniless had become prosperous, and the principal merchants and manufacturers, having realised large capitals, retired from business. But the colossal fortunes were made by the gentlemen who had assisted the administration in raising the price of the public funds and in managing the issues of the pink shells. The effect of this immense increase of the national wealth and of this creation of new and powerful classes of society was speedily felt. Great moves to the westward were perpetual, and a variety of sumptuous squares and streets were immediately run up in that chosen land. Butlers were at a premium, coach-makers never slept, card-engravers, having exhausted copper, had recourse to steel, and the demand for arms at the Herald's College was so great that even the mystical genius of Garter was exhausted, and hostile meetings were commenced between the junior members of some ancient families, to whom the same crest had been unwittingly apportioned, but, the seconds interfering, they discovered themselves to be relations. All the eldest sons were immediately to get into Parliament, and all the younger ones as quickly into the Guards, and the simple Fantaisian Envoy, who had the peculiar felicity of taking everything *au pied du lettre*, made a calculation that, if these arrangements were duly effected, in a short time the Vraibleusian representatives would exceed the Vraibleusian represented; and that there would be at least three officers in the Vraibleusian Guards to every private. Judging from the beards and mustaches which now abounded, this great result was near at hand. With the snub nose which is the characteristic of the Millionaires, these appendages produce a pleasing effect.

When the excitement had a little subsided, when their mighty mansions were magnificently furnished, when their bright equipages were fairly launched, and the due complement of their liveried retainers perfected, when, in short,

they had imitated the aristocracy in every point in which wealth could rival blood : then the new people discovered with dismay that one thing was yet wanting, which treasure could not purchase, and which the wit of others could not supply Manner. In homely phrase, the Millionaires did not know how to behave themselves. Accustomed to the counting-house, the factory, or the exchange, they looked queer in saloons, and said ' Sir ' when they addressed you , and seemed stiff, and hard, and hot Then the solecisms they committed in more formal society, oh ! they were outrageous , and a leading article in an eminent journal was actually written upon the subject. I dare not write the deeds they did , but it was whispered that when they drank wine they filled their glasses to the very brim All this delighted the old class, who were as envious of their riches as the new people were emulous of their style

In any other country except Vraibleusia persons so situated would have consoled themselves for their disagreeable position by a consciousness that their posterity would not be annoyed by the same deficiencies ; but the wonderful Vraibleusian people resembled no other, even in their failings They determined to acquire in a day that which had hitherto been deemed the gradual consequence of tedious education

A ' Society for the Diffusion of Fashionable Knowledge ' was announced , the Millionaires looked triumphantly mysterious, the aristocrats quizzed The object of the society is intimated by its title , and the method by which its institutors proposed to attain this object was the periodical publication of pamphlets, under the superintendence of a competent committee The first treatise appeared its subject was NONCHALANCE. It instructed its students ever to appear inattentive in the society of men, and heartless when they conversed with women It taught them not to understand a man if he were witty ; to

misunderstand him if he were eloquent, to yawn or stare if he chanced to elevate his voice, or presumed to ruffle the placidity of the social calm by addressing his fellow-creatures with teeth unpainted. Excellence was never to be recognised, but only disparaged with a look: an opinion or a sentiment, and the *nonchalant* was lost for ever. For these, he was to substitute a smile like a damp sunbeam, a moderate curl of the upper lip, and the all-speaking and perpetual shrug of the shoulders. By a skilful management of these qualities it was shown to be easy to ruin another's reputation and ensure your own without ever opening your mouth. To woman, this exquisite treatise said much in few words. 'Listlessness, listlessness, listlessness,' was the edict by which the most beautiful works of nature were to be regulated, who are only truly charming when they make us feel and feel themselves. 'Listlessness, listlessness, listlessness', for when you choose not to be listless, the contrast is so striking that the triumph must be complete.

The treatise said much more, which I shall omit. It forgot, however, to remark that this vaunted nonchalance may be the offspring of the most contemptible and the most odious of passions: and that while it may be exceedingly refined to appear uninterested when others are interested, to witness excellence without emotion, and to listen to genius without animation, the heart of the Insensible may as often be inflamed by Envy as inspired by Fashion.

Dissertations 'On leaving cards,' 'On cutting intimate friends,' 'On cravats,' 'On dinner courses,' 'On poor relations,' 'On bores,' 'On lions,' were announced as speedily to appear. In the meantime, the Essay on Nonchalance produced the best effects. A *ci-devant* stock-broker cut a Duke dead at his club the day after its publication, and his daughter yawned while his Grace's eldest son, the Marquess, made her an offer as she was

singing 'Di tanti palpiti' The aristocrats got a little frightened, and when an eminent hop-merchant and his lady had asked a dozen Countesses to dinner, and forgot to be at home to receive them. the old class left off quizzing

The pamphlets, however, continued issuing forth, and the new people advanced at a rate which was awful They actually began to originate some ideas of their own, and there was a whisper among the leaders of voting the aristocrats old-fashioned The Diffusion Society now caused these exalted personages great anxiety and uneasiness They argued that Fashion was a relative quality, that it was quite impossible, and not to be expected, that all people were to aspire to be fashionable, that it was not in the nature of things, and that, if it were, society could not exist, that the more their imitators advanced the more they should baffle their imitations; that a first and fashionable class was a necessary consequence of the organisation of man. and that a line of demarcation would for ever be drawn between them and the other islanders The warmth and eagerness with which they maintained and promulgated their opinions might have tempted, however, an impartial person to suspect that they secretly entertained some doubts of their truth and soundness

On the other hand, the other party maintained that Fashion was a positive quality, that the moment a person obtained a certain degree of refinement he or she became, in fact and essentially, fashionable, that the views of the old class were unphilosophical and illiberal, and unworthy of an enlightened age, that men are equal, and that everything is open to everybody, and that when we take into consideration the nature of man, the origin of society, and a few other things, and duly consider the constant inclination and progression towards perfection which mankind evince, there was no reason why, in the course of time, the whole nation should not go to Almack's on the same night.

At this moment of doubt and dispute the Government of Vraibleusia, with that spirit of conciliation and liberality and that perfect wisdom for which it had been long celebrated, caring very little for the old' class, whose interest, it well knew, was to support it and being exceedingly desirous of engaging the affections of the new race, declared in their favour; and acting upon that sublime scale of measures for which this great nation has always been so famous, the Statue issued an edict that a new literature should be invented, in order at once to complete the education of the Millionaires and the triumph of the Romantic over the Classic School of Manners.

The most eminent writers were, as usual, in the pay of the Government, and BURLINGTON, A TALE OF FASHIONABLE LIFE, in three volumes post octavo, was sent forth Two or three similar works, bearing titles equally euphonious and aristocratic, were published daily, and so exquisite was the style of these productions, so naturally artificial the construction of their plots, and so admirably inventive the conception of their characters, that many who had been repulsed by the somewhat abstract matter and arid style of the treatises, seduced by the interest of a story, and by the dazzling delicacies of a charming style, really now picked up a considerable quantity of very useful knowledge; so that when the delighted students had eaten some fifty or sixty imaginary dinners in my lord's dining-room, and whirled some fifty or sixty imaginary waltzes in my lady's dancing-room, there was scarcely a brute left among the whole Millionaires. But what produced the most beneficial effects on the new people, and excited the greatest indignation and despair among the old class, were some volumes which the Government, with shocking Machiavelism, bribed some needy scions of nobility to scribble, and which revealed certain secrets vainly believed to be quite sacred and inviolable.

Chapter XIII

Shortly after the sailing of the great fleet the Private Secretary engaged in a speculation which was rather more successful than any one contained in his pamphlet on 'The Present State of the Western Republics'

One morning, as he and Popanilla were walking on a quay, and deliberating on the clauses of the projected commercial treaty between Vraibleusia and Fantaisie, the Secretary suddenly stopped, as if he had seen his father's ghost or lost the thread of his argument, and asked Popanilla, with an air of suppressed agitation, whether he observed anything in the distance. Popanilla, who, like all savages, was long-sighted, applying to his eye the glass which, in conformity to the custom of the country, he always wore round his neck, confessed that he saw nothing. The Secretary, who had never unfixed his glass nor moved a step since he asked the question, at length, by pointing with his finger, attracted Popanilla's attention to what his Excellency conceived to be a porpoise bobbing up and down in the waves. The Secretary, however, was not of the same opinion as the Ambassador. He was not very communicative, indeed, as to his own opinion upon this grave subject, but he talked of making farther observations when the tide went down, and was so listless, abstracted, and absent, during the rest of their conversation, that it soon ceased, and they speedily parted.

The next day, when Popanilla read the morning papers, a feat which he regularly performed, for spelling the newspaper was quite delicious to one who had so recently learned to read, he found that they spoke of nothing but of the discovery of a new island. information of which had been received by the Government only the preceding night. The Fantaisian Ambassador turned quite pale, and for the first time in his life experienced the passion of jealousy,

the green-eyed monster, so called from only being experienced by green-horns. Already the prominent state he represented seemed to retire to the background. He did not doubt that the Vraibleusians were the most capricious as well as the most commercial nation in the world. His reign was evidently over. The new island would send forth a Prince still more popular. His allowance of pink shells would be gradually reduced, and finally withdrawn. His doubts, also, as to the success of the recent expedition to Fantaisie began to revive. His rising reminiscences of his native land, which, with the joint assistance of popularity and philosophy, he had hitherto succeeded in stifling, were indeed awkward. He could not conceive his mistress with a page and a poodle. He feared much that the cargo was not well assorted. Popanilla determined to enquire after his canoe.

His courage, however, was greatly reassured when, on reading the second edition, he learned that the new island was not of considerable size, though most eligibly situate, and, moreover, that it was perfectly void of inhabitants. When the third edition was published he found, to his surprise, that the Private Secretary was the discoverer of this opposition island. This puzzled the Plenipotentiary greatly. He read on; he found that this acquisition, upon which all Vraibleusia was congratulated in such glowing terms by all its journals, actually produced nothing. His Excellency began to breathe, another paragraph, and he found that the rival island was, a rock! He remembered the porpoise of yesterday. The island certainly could not be very large, even at low water. Popanilla once more felt like a Prince. he defied all the discoverers that could ever exist. He thought of the great resources of the great country he represented with proud satisfaction. He waited with easy confidence the return of the fleet which had carried out the most judicious assortment with which he had ever been acquainted to the readiest market of which

he had any knowledge. He had no doubt his mistress would look most charmingly in a barge Popanilla determined to present his canoe to the National Museum

Although his Excellency had existed in the highest state of astonishment during his whole mission to Vraibleusia, it must be confessed, now that he understood his companion's question of yesterday, he particularly stared His wonder was not decreased in the evening, when the 'Government Gazette' appeared It contained an order for the immediate fortification of the new island by the most skilful engineers, without estimates A strong garrison was instantly embarked A Governor, and a Deputy-Governor, and Storekeepers, more plentiful than stores, were to accompany them The Private Secretary went out as President of Council A Bishop was promised, and a complete Court of Judicature, Chancery, King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, were to be off the next week It is only due to the characters of courtiers, who are so often reproached with ingratitude to their patrons, to record that the Private Secretary, in the most delicate manner, placed at the disposal of his former employer, the Marquess Moustache, the important office of Agent for the Indemnity Claims of the original Inhabitants of the Island, the post being a sinecure, the income being considerable, and local attendance being unnecessary, the noble Lord, in a manner equally delicate, appointed himself

'Upon what system,' one day enquired that unwearied political student, the Fantasian Ambassador, of his old friend Skindeep, 'does your Government surround a small rock in the middle of the sea with fortifications, and cram it full of clerks, soldiers, lawyers, and priests?'

'Why, really, your Excellency, I am the last man in the world to answer questions, but I believe we call it THE COLONIAL SYSTEM!'

Before the President, and Governor, and Deputy-Governor, and Storekeepers had embarked, the Vraibleusian

journals, who thought that the public had been satiated with congratulations on the Colonial System, detected that the present colony was a job. Their reasoning was so convincing, and their denunciations so impressive, that the Managers got frightened, and cut off one of the Deputy-Storekeepers. The President of Council now got more frightened than the Managers. He was one of those men who think that the world can be saved by writing a pamphlet. A pamphlet accordingly appeared upon the subject of the new colony. The writer showed that the debateable land was the most valuable acquisition ever attained by a nation famous for their acquisitions, that there was a spring of water in the middle of the rock of a remarkable freshness, and which was never dry except during the summer and the earlier winter months, that all our outward-bound ships would experience infinite benefit from this fresh water; that the scurvy would therefore disappear from the service, and that the naval victories which the Vraibleusians would gain in future wars would consequently be occasioned by the present colony. No one could mistake the felicitous reasoning of the author of 'The Present State of the Western Republics'!

About this time Popanilla fell ill. He lost his appetite and his spirits, and his digestion was sadly disordered. His friends endeavoured to console him by telling him that dyspepsia was the national disease of Vraibleusia, that its connection with civil and religious liberty was indissoluble; that every man, woman, and child above fifteen in the island was a martyr to it, that it was occasioned by their rapid mode of despatching their meals, which again was occasioned by the little time which the most active nation in the world could afford to bestow upon such a losing business as eating.

All this was no consolation to a man who had lost his appetite; and so Popanilla sent for a gentleman who, he was told, was the most eminent physician in the island

The most eminent physician, when he arrived, would not listen to a single syllable that his patient wished to address to him. He told Popanilla that his disorder was 'decidedly liver', that it was occasioned by his eating his meat before his bread instead of after it, and drinking at the end of the first course instead of the beginning of the second; that he had only to correct these ruinous habits, and that he would then regain his tone

Popanilla observed the instructions of the eminent physician to the very letter. He invariably eat his bread before his meat, and watched the placing of the first dish of the second course upon the table ere he ventured to refresh himself with any liquid. At the end of a week he was infinitely worse.

He now called in a gentleman who was recommended to him as the most celebrated practitioner in all Vraibleusia. The most celebrated practitioner listened with great attention to every particular that his patient had to state, but never condescended to open his own mouth. Popanilla was delighted, and revenged himself for the irritability of the eminent physician. After two more visits, the most celebrated practitioner told Popanilla that his disorder was 'unquestionably nervous', that he had over-excited himself by talking too much; that in future he must count five between each word he uttered, never ask any questions, and avoid society, that is, never stay at an evening-party on any consideration later than twenty-two minutes past two, and never be induced by any persuasion to dine out more than once on the same day. The most celebrated practitioner added that he had only to observe these regulations, and that he would speedily recover his energy.

Popanilla never asked a question for a whole week, and Skindeep never knew him more delightful. He not only counted five, but ten, between every word he uttered, and determining that his cure should not be delayed, whenever he had nobody to speak to he continued counting. In a

few days this solitary computation brought on a slow fever.

He now determined to have a consultation between the most eminent physician and the most celebrated practitioner. It was delightful to witness the meeting of these great men. Not a shade of jealousy dimmed the sunshine of their countenances. After a consultation, they agreed that Popanilla's disorder was neither 'liver,' nor 'nervous,' but 'mind': that he had done too much, that he had overworked his brain; that he must take more exercise; that he must breathe more air; that he must have relaxation; that he must have change of scene.

'Where shall I go?' was the first question which Popanilla had sent forth for a fortnight, and it was addressed to Skindeep.

'Really, your Excellency, I am the last man in the world to answer questions, but the place which is generally frequented by us when we are suffering from your complaint is Blunderland.'

'Well, then, to Blunderland let us go!'

Shortly before Popanilla's illness he had been elected a member of the Vraibleusian Horticultural Society, and one evening he had endeavoured to amuse himself by reading the following CHAPTER ON FRUIT.

Chapter XIV

That a taste for fruit is inherent in man is an opinion which is sanctioned by the conduct of man in all ages and in all countries. While some nations have considered it profanation or pollution to nourish themselves with flesh or solace themselves with fish, while almost every member of the animal creation has in turn been considered either sacred or unclean, mankind, in all climes and in all countries, the Hindoo and the Hebrew, the Egyptian and the Greek,

the Roman and the Frank, have, in some degree, made good their boastful claim to reason, by universally feeding upon those delightful productions of Nature which are nourished with the dews of heaven, and which live for ever in its breath

And, indeed, when we consider how exceedingly refreshing at all times is the flavour of fruit, how very natural, and, in a manner, born in him, is man's inclination for it, how little it is calculated to pall upon his senses, and how conducive, when not eaten to excess, it is to his health, as well as to his pleasure, we must not be surprised that a conviction of its excellence should have been one of those few subjects on which men have never disagreed

That some countries are more favoured in their fruit than others is a fact so notorious that its notice is unnecessary, but we are not therefore to suppose that their appetite for it is more keen than the appetite of other nations for their fruit who live in less genial climes. Indeed, if we were not led to believe that all nations are inspired by an equal love for this production, it might occasionally be suspected that some of those nations who are least skilful as horticulturists evince a greater passion for their inferior growths than more fortunate people for their choicer produce. The effects of bad fruit, however, upon the constitution, and consequently upon the national character, are so injurious that every liberal man must regret that any people, either from ignorance or obligation, should be forced to have recourse to anything so fatal, and must feel that it is the duty of every one who professes to be a philanthropist to propagate and encourage a taste for good fruit throughout all countries of the globe.

A vast number of centuries before Popanilla had the fortune to lose his mistress's lock of hair, and consequently to become an ambassador to Vraibleusia, the inhabitants of that island, then scarcely more civilised than their new allies of Fantaisie were at present, suffered very considerably

from the trash which they devoured, from that innate taste for fruit already noticed. In fact, although there are antiquaries who pretend that the Vraibleusians possessed some of the species of wild plums and apples even at that early period, the majority of enquirers are disposed to believe that their desserts were solely confined to the wildest berries, horse-chestnuts, and acorns.

A tradition runs, that while they were committing these abominations a ship, one of the first ships that had ever touched at the island, arrived at the present port of Hubbabub, then a spacious and shipless bay. The master of the vessel, on being brought before the King (for the story I am recording happened long before the construction of the miraculous Statue), presented, with his right hand, to his Majesty, a small pyramidal substance of a golden hue, which seemed to spring out of green and purple leaves. His Majesty did not exactly understand the intention of this ceremony; but of course, like a true legitimate, construed it into a symbol of homage. No sooner had the King brought the unknown substance near to his eyes, with the intention of scrutinising its nature, than the fragrance was so delightful that by mistake he applied it to his mouth. The King only took one mouthful, and then, with a cry of rapture, instantly handed the delicacy to his favourite, who, to the great mortification of the Secretary of State, finished it. The stranger, however, immediately supplied the surrounding courtiers from a basket which was slung on his left arm, and no sooner had they all tasted his gift than they fell upon their knees to worship him, vowing that the distributor of such delight must be more than man. If this avowal be considered absurd and extraordinary in this present age of philosophy, we must not forget to make due allowance for the palates of individuals who, having been so long accustomed merely to horse-chestnuts and acorns, suddenly, for the first time in their lives, tasted Pine-apple.

The stranger, with an air of great humility, disclaimed their proffered adoration, and told them that, far from being superior to common mortals, he was, on the contrary, one of the lowliest of the human race, in fact, he did not wish to conceal it, in spite of his vessel and his attendants, he was merely a market-gardener on a great scale. This beautiful fruit he had recently discovered in the East, to which quarter of the world he annually travelled in order to obtain a sufficient quantity to supply the great Western hemisphere, of which he himself was a native. Accident had driven him, with one of his ships, into the Island of Vraibleusia, and, as the islanders appeared to be pleased with his cargo, he said that he should have great pleasure in supplying them at present and receiving their orders for the future.

The proposition was greeted with enthusiasm. The King immediately entered into a contract with the market-gardener on his own terms. The sale, or cultivation, or even the eating of all other fruits was declared high-treason, and pine-apple, for weighty reasons duly recited in the royal proclamation, announced as the established fruit of the realm. The cargo, under the superintendence of some of the most trusty of the crew, was unshipped for the immediate supply of the island, and the merchant and his customers parted, mutually delighted and mutually profited.

Time flew on. The civilisation of Vraibleusia was progressive, as civilisation always is; and the taste for pine-apples ever on the increase, as the taste for pine-apples ever should be. The supply was regular and excellent, the prices reasonable, and the tradesmen civil. They, of course had not failed to advance in fair proportion with the national prosperity. Their numbers had much increased as well as their customers. Fresh agents arrived with every fresh cargo. They had long quitted the stalls with which they had been contented on their first settlement in the island, and now were the dapper owners of neat

depôts, in all parts of the kingdom where depôts could find customers

A few more centuries, and affairs began to change. All that I have related as matter of fact, and which certainly is not better authenticated than many other things that happened two or three thousand years ago, which, however, the most sceptical will not presume to maintain did not take place, was treated as the most idle and ridiculous fable by the dealers in pine-apples themselves. They said that they knew nothing about a market-gardener, that they were, and had always been, the subjects of the greatest Prince in the world, compared with whom all other crowned heads ranked merely as subjects did with their immediate sovereigns. This Prince, they said, lived in the most delicious region in the world, and the fruit which they imported could only be procured from his private gardens, where it sprang from one of the trees that had bloomed in the gardens of the Hesperides. The Vraibleusians were at first a little surprised at this information, but the old tradition of the market-gardener was certainly an improbable one, and the excellence of the fruit and the importance assumed by those who supplied it were deemed exceedingly good evidence of the truth of the present story. When the dealers had repeated their new tale for a certain number of years, there was not an individual in the island who in the slightest degree suspected its veracity. One more century, and no person had ever heard that any suspicions had ever existed.

The immediate agents of the Prince of the World could, of course, be no common personages, and the servants of the gardener, who some centuries before had meckly disclaimed the proffered reverence of his delighted customers, now insisted upon constant adoration from every eater of pine-apples in the island. In spite, however, of the arrogance of the dealers, of their refusal to be responsible to the laws of the country in which they lived, and of the

universal precedence which, on all occasions, was claimed even by the shop-boys, so decided was the taste which the Vraibleusians had acquired for pine-apples, that there is little doubt that, had the dealers in this delicious fruit been contented with the respect and influence and profit which were the consequences of their vocation, the Vraibleusians would never have presumed to have grumbled at their arrogance or to have questioned their privileges. But the agents, wearied of the limited sphere to which their exertions were confined, and encouraged by the success which every new claim and pretence on their part invariably experienced, began to evince an inclination to interfere in other affairs besides those of fruit, and even expressed their willingness to undertake no less an office than the management of the Statue

A century or two were solely occupied by conflicts occasioned by the unreasonable ambition of these dealers in pine-apples. Such great political effects could be produced by men apparently so unconnected with politics as market-gardeners ! Ever supported by the lower ranks, whom they supplied with fruit of the most exquisite flavour without charge, they were, for a long time, often the successful opponents, always the formidable adversaries, of the Vraibleusian aristocracy, who were the objects of their envy and the victims of their rapaciousness. The Government at last, by a vigorous effort, triumphed. In spite of the wishes of the majority of the nation, the whole of the dealers were one day expelled the island, and the Managers of the Statue immediately took possession of their establishments.

By distributing the stock of fruit which was on hand liberally, the Government, for a short time, reconciled the people to the change ; but as their warehouses became daily less furnished they were daily reminded that, unless some system were soon adopted, the Islanders must be deprived of a luxury to which they had been so long accustomed

that its indulgence had, in fact, become a second nature. No one of the managers had the hardihood to propose a recurrence to horse-chestnuts. Pride and fear alike forbade a return to their old purveyor. Other fruits there were which, in spite of the contract with the market-gardener, had at various times been secretly introduced into the island; but they had never greatly flourished, and the Statue was loth to recommend to the notice of his subjects productions an indulgence in which, through the instigation of the recently-expelled agents, it had so often denounced as detrimental to the health, and had so often discouraged by the severest punishments

At this difficult and delicate crisis, when even expedients seemed exhausted and statesmen were at fault, the genius of an individual offered a substitute. An inventive mind discovered the power of propagating suckers. The expelled dealers had either been ignorant of this power, or had concealed their knowledge of it. They ever maintained that it was impossible for pine-apples to grow except in one spot, and that the whole earth must be supplied from the gardens of the palace of the Prince of the World. Now, the Vraibleusians were flattered with the patriotic fancy of eating pine-apples of a home-growth; and the blessed fortune of that nation, which did not depend for their supply of fruit upon a foreign country, was eagerly expatiated on. Secure from extortion and independent of caprice, the Vraibleusians were no longer to be insulted by the presence of foreigners; who, while they violated their laws with impunity, referred the Vraibleusians, when injured and complaining, to a foreign master.

No doubt this appeal to the patriotism, and the common sense, and the vanity of the nation would have been successful had not the produce of the suckers been both inferior in size and deficient in flavour. The Vraibleusians tasted and shook their heads. The supply, too, was as imperfect as the article; for the Government gardeners were but

sorry horticulturists, and were ever making experiments and alterations in their modes of culture. The article was scarce, though the law had decreed it universal, and the Vraibleusians were obliged to feed upon fruit which they considered at the same time both poor and expensive. They protested as strongly against the present system as its promulgators had protested against the former one, and they revenged themselves for their grievances by breaking the shop-windows.

As any result was preferable, in the view of the Statute, to the re-introduction of foreign fruit and foreign agents, and as the Managers considered it highly important that an indissoluble connection should in future exist between the Government and so influential and profitable a branch of trade, they determined to adopt the most vigorous measures to infuse a taste for suckers in the discontented populace. But the eating of fruit being clearly a matter of taste, it is evidently a habit which should rather be encouraged by a plentiful supply of exquisite produce than enforced by the introduction of burning and bayonets. The consequences of the strong measures of the Government were universal discontent and partial rebellion. The Islanders, foolishly ascribing the miseries which they endured, not so much to the folly of the Government as to the particular fruit through which the dissensions had originated, began to entertain a disgust for pine-apples altogether, and to sicken at the very mention of that production which had once occasioned them so much pleasure, and which had once commanded such decided admiration. They universally agreed that there were many other fruits in the world besides Pine-apple which had been too long neglected. One dilated on the rich flavour of Melon, another panegyrised Pumpkin, and offered to make up by quantity for any slight deficiency in *goût*, Cherries were not without their advocates, Strawberries were not forgotten. One maintained that the Fig had

been pointed out for the established fruit of all countries ; while another asked, with a reeling eye, whether they need go far to seek when a God had condescended to preside over the Grape ! In short, there was not a fruit which flourishes that did not find its votaries. Strange to say, another foreign product, imported from a neighbouring country famous for its barrenness, counted the most, and the fruit faction which chiefly frightened the Vraibleusian Government was an acid set, who crammed themselves with Crab-apples.

It was this party which first seriously and practically conceived the idea of utterly abolishing the ancient custom of eating pine-apples. While they themselves professed to devour no other fruit save crabs, they at the same time preached the doctrine of an universal fruit toleration, which they showed would be the necessary and natural consequence of the destruction of the old monopoly. Influenced by these representations, the great body of the people openly joined the Crab-apple men in their open attacks. The minority, who still retained a taste for pines, did not yield without an arduous though ineffectual struggle. During the riots occasioned by this rebellion the Hall of Audience was broken open, and the miraculous Statue, which was reputed to have a great passion for pine-apples, dashed to the ground. The Managers were either slain or disappeared. The whole affairs of the kingdom were conducted by a body called ' the Fruit Committee ' ; and thus a total revolution of the Government of Vraibleusia was occasioned by the prohibition of foreign pine-apples. What an argument in favour of free-trade !

Every fruit, except that one which had so recently been supported by the influence of authority and the terrors of law, might now be seen and devoured in the streets of Hubbabub. In one corner men were sucking oranges, as if they had lived their whole lives on salt. In another, stuffing pumpkin, like cannibals at their first child. Here one

took in at a mouthful a bunch of grapes, from which might have been pressed a good quart. Another was lying on the ground from a surfeit of mulberries. The effect of this irrational excess will be conceived by the judicious reader. Calcutta itself never suffered from a cholera morbus half so fearful. Thousands were dying. Were I Thucydides or Boccaccio, I would write pages on this plague. The commonwealth itself must soon have yielded its ghost, for all order had ceased throughout the island ever since they had deserted pine-apples. There was no Government anarchy alone was perfect. Of the Fruit Committee, many of the members were dead or dying, and the rest were robbing orchards.

At this moment of disorganisation and dismay a stout soldier, one of the crab-apple faction, who had possessed sufficient command over himself, in spite of the seeming voracity of his appetite, not to indulge to a dangerous excess, made his way one morning into the old Hall of Audience, and there, groping about, succeeded in finding the golden head of the Statue, which placing on the hilt of his sword, the point of which he had stuck in the pedestal, he announced to the city that he had discovered the secret of conversing with this wonderful piece of mechanism, and that in future he would take care of the health and fortune of the State.

There were some who thought it rather strange that the head-piece should possess the power of resuming its old functions, although deprived of the aid of the body which contained the greater portion of the machinery. As it was evidently well supported by the sword, they were not surprised that it should stand without the use of its legs. But the stout soldier was the only one in the island who enjoyed the blessing of health. He was fresh, vigorous, and vigilant; they, exhausted, weak, and careless of everything except cure. He soon took measures for the prevention of future mischief and for the cure of the

present, and when his fellow-islanders had recovered, some were grateful, others fearful, and all obedient

So long as the stout soldier lived no dissensions on the subject of fruit ever broke out. Although he himself never interfered in the sale of the article, and never attempted to create another monopoly, still, by his influence and authority, he prevented any excess being occasioned by the fruit toleration which was enjoyed. Indeed, the Vraibleusians themselves had suffered so severely from their late indiscretions that such excesses were not likely again to occur. People began to discover that it was not quite so easy a thing as they had imagined for every man to be his own fruiterer; and that gardening was a craft which, like others, required great study, long practice, and early experience. Unable to supply themselves, the majority became the victims of quack traders. They sickened of spongy apricots, and foxy pears, and withered plums, and blighted apples, and tasteless berries. They at length suspected that a nation might fare better if its race of fruiterers were overseen and supported by the State, if their skill and their market were alike secured. Although, no longer being tempted to suffer from a surfeit, the health of the Islanders had consequently recovered, this was, after all, but a negative blessing, and they sadly missed a luxury once so reasonable and so refreshing. They sighed for an established fruit and a protected race of cultivators. But the stout soldier was so sworn an enemy to any Government Fruit, and so decided an admirer of the least delightful, that the people, having no desire of being forced to eat crab-apples, only longed for more delicious food in silence.

At length the stout soldier died, and on the night of his death the sword which had so long supported the pretended Government snapped in twain. No arrangement existed for carrying on the administration of affairs. The master-mind was gone, without having imparted the secret of conversing with the golden head to any successor. The

people assembled in agitated crowds. Each knew his neighbour's thoughts without their being declared. All smacked their hips, and a cry for pine-apples rent the skies.

At this moment the Aboriginal Inhabitant appeared, and announced that in examining the old Hall of Audience, which had been long locked up, he had discovered in a corner, where they had been flung by the stout soldier when he stole away the head, the remaining portions of the Statue, that they were quite uninjured, and that on fixing the head once more upon them, and winding up the works, he was delighted to find that this great work of his ancestor, under whose superintendence the nation had so flourished, resumed all its ancient functions. The people were in a state of mind for a miracle, and they hailed the joyful wonder with shouts of triumph. The Statue was placed under the provisional care of the Aboriginal. All arrangements for its superintendence were left to his discretion, and its advice was instantly to be taken upon that subject which at present was nearest the people's hearts.

But that subject was encompassed with difficulties. Pine-apples could only be again procured by an application to the Prince of the World, whose connection they had rejected, and by an introduction into the island of those foreign agents, who, now convinced that the Vraibleusians could not exist without their presence, would be more arrogant and ambitious and turbulent than ever. Indeed, the Aboriginal feared that the management of the Statue would be the *sine quâ non* of negotiation with the Prince. If this were granted, it was clear that Vraibleusia must in future only rank as a dependent state of a foreign power, since the direction of the whole island would actually be at the will of the supplier of pine-apples. Ah! this mysterious taste for fruit! In politics it has often occasioned infinite embarrassment.

At this critical moment the Aboriginal received information that, although the eating of pine-apples had been

utterly abolished, and although it was generally supposed that a specimen of this fruit had long ceased to exist in the country, nevertheless a body of persons, chiefly consisting of the descendants of the Government gardeners who had succeeded the foreign agents, and who had never lost their taste for this pre-eminent fruit, had long been in the habit of secretly raising, for their private eating, pine-apples from the produce of those suckers which had originally excited such odium and occasioned such misfortunes. Long practice, they said, and infinite study, had so perfected them in this art that they now succeeded in producing pine-apples which, both for size and flavour, were not inferior to the boasted produce of a foreign clime. Their specimens verified their assertion, and the whole nation were invited to an instant trial. The long interval which had elapsed since any man had enjoyed a treat so agreeable lent, perhaps, an additional flavour to that which was really excellent, and so enraptured and enthusiastic were the great majority of the people that the propagators of suckers would have had no difficulty, had they pushed the point, in procuring as favourable and exclusive a contract as the market-gardener of ancient days.

But the Aboriginal and his advisers were wisely mindful that the passions of a people are not arguments for legislation; and they felt conscious that when the first enthusiasm had subsided, and when their appetites were somewhat satisfied, the discontented voices of many who had been long used to other fruits would be recognised even amidst the shouts of the majority. They therefore greatly qualified the contract between the nation and the present fruiterers. An universal Toleration of Fruit was allowed, but no man was to take office under Government, or enter the services, or in any way become connected with the Court, who was not supplied from the Government depôts.

Since this happy restoration Pine-apple has remained the established fruit of the Island of Vraibleusia, and, it must

be confessed, has been found wonderfully conducive to the health and happiness of the Islanders. Some sectarians still remain obstinate, or tasteless enough to prefer pumpkin, or gorge the most acid apples, or chew the commonest pears, but they form a slight minority, which will gradually altogether disappear. The votaries of Pine-apple pretend to observe the characteristic effect which such food produces upon the feeders. They denounce them as stupid, sour, and vulgar.

But while, notwithstanding an universal toleration, such an unanimity of taste apparently prevails throughout the island, as if Fruit were a subject of such peculiar nicety that difference of opinion must necessarily rise among men, great Fruit factions even now prevail in Vraibleusia, and, what is more extraordinary, prevail even among the admirers of pine-apples themselves. Of these, the most important is a sect which professes to discover a natural deficiency not only in all other fruits, but even in the finest pine-apples. Fruit, they maintain, should never be eaten in the state in which Nature yields it to man, and they consequently are indefatigable in prevailing upon the less discriminating part of mankind to heighten the flavour of their pine-apples with ginger, or even with pepper. Although they profess to adopt these stimulants from the great admiration which they entertain for a high flavour, there are, nevertheless, some less ardent people who suspect that they rather have recourse to them from the weakness of their digestion.

Chapter XV

As his Excellency Prince Popanilla really could not think of being annoyed by the attentions of the mob during his visit to Blunderland, he travelled quite in a quiet way, under the name of the Chevalier de Fantaisie, and was

accompanied only by Skindeep and two attendants. As Blunderland was one of the islands of the Vraibleusian Archipelago, they arrived there after the sail of a few hours.

The country was so beautiful that the Chevalier was almost reminded of Fantaisie. Green meadows and flourishing trees made him remember the railroads and canals of Vraibleusia without regret, or with disgust, which is much the same. The women were angelic, which is the highest praise; and the men the most light-hearted, merry, obliging, entertaining fellows that he had met with in the whole course of his life. Oh! it was delicious.

After an hour's dashing drive, he arrived at a city which, had he not seen Hubbabub, he should have imagined was one of the most considerable in the world; but compared with the Vraibleusian capital it was a street.

Shortly after his arrival, according to the custom of the place, Popanilla joined the public table of his hotel at dinner. He was rather surprised that, instead of knives and forks being laid for the convenience of the guests, the plates were flanked by daggers and pistols. As Popanilla now made a point of never asking a question of Skindeep, he addressed himself for information to his other neighbour, one of the civillest, most hospitable, and joyous rogues that ever set a table in a roar. On Popanilla enquiring the reason of their using these singular instruments, his neighbour, with an air of great astonishment, confessed his ignorance of any people ever using any other; and in his turn asked how they could possibly eat their dinner without. The Chevalier was puzzled, but he was now too well bred ever to pursue an enquiry.

Popanilla, being thirsty, helped himself to a goblet of water, which was at hand. It was the most delightful water that he ever tasted. In a few minutes he found that he was a little dizzy, and, supposing this megrim to be occasioned

by the heat of the room, he took another draught of water to recover himself.

As his neighbour was telling him an excellent joke a man entered the room and shot the joker through the head. The opposite guest immediately recharged his pistol with effect, and revenged the loss. A party of men well armed, now rushed in, and a brisk conflict immediately ensued. Popanilla, who was very dizzy, was fortunately pushed under the table. When the firing and slashing had ceased, he ventured to crawl out. He found that the assailants had been beaten off, though unfortunately with the total loss of all the guests, who lay lifeless about the room. Even the prudent Skindcep, who had sought refuge in a closet, had lost his nose, which was a pity, because, although this gentleman had never been in Blunderland before, he had passed his whole life in maintaining that the accounts of the disturbances in that country were greatly exaggerated. Popanilla rang the bell, and the waiters, who were remarkably attentive, swept away the dead bodies, and brought him a roasted potato for supper.

The Chevalier soon retired to rest. He found at the side of his bed a blunderbuss, a cutlass, and a pike. and he was directed to secure the door of his chamber with a great chain and a massy iron bar. Feeling great confidence in his securities, although he was quite ignorant of the cause of alarm, and very much exhausted with the bustle of the day, he enjoyed sounder sleep than had refreshed him for many weeks. He was awakened in the middle of the night by a loud knocking at his door. He immediately seized his blunderbuss, but, recognising the voice of his own valet, he only took his pike. His valet told him to unbar without loss of time, for the house had been set on fire. Popanilla immediately made his escape, but found himself surrounded by the incendiaries. He gave himself up for lost, when a sudden charge of cavalry brought him off in triumph. He was convinced of the utility of light-horse.

The military had arrived with such despatch that the fire was the least effective that had wakened the house for the whole week. It was soon extinguished, and Popanilla again retired to his bedroom, not forgetting his bar and his cham.

In the morning Popanilla was roused by his landlord, who told him that a large party was about to partake of the pleasures of the chase, and most politely enquired whether he would like to join them. Popanilla assented, and after having eaten an excellent breakfast, and received a favourable bulletin of Skindeep's wound, he mounted his horse. The party was numerous and well armed. Popanilla enquired of a huntsman what sport they generally followed in Blunderland. According to the custom of this country, where they never give a direct answer, the huntsman said that he did not know that there was any other sport but one. Popanilla thought him a brute, and dug his spurs into his horse.

They went off at a fine rate, and the exercise was most exhilarating. In a short time, as they were cantering along a defile, they received a sharp fire from each side, which rather reduced their numbers, but they revenged themselves for this loss when they regained the plain, where they burnt two villages, slew two or three hundred head of women, and bagged children without number. On their return home to dinner they chased a small body of men over a heath for nearly two hours, which afforded good sport, but they did not succeed in running them down, as they themselves were in turn chased by another party. Altogether, the day was not deficient in interest, and Popanilla found in the evening his powers of digestion improved.

After passing his days in this manner for about a fortnight, Popanilla perfectly recovered from his dyspepsia, and Skindeep's wound having now healed, he retired with regret from this healthy climate. He took advantage of

the leisure moment which was afforded during the sail to enquire the reason of the disturbed state of this interesting country. He was told that it was in consequence of the majority of the inhabitants persisting in importing their own pine-apples.

Chapter XVI

On his return to Hubbabub, the Chevalier de Fantaisie found the city in the greatest confusion. The military were marshalled in all directions, the streets were lined with field-pieces, no one was abroad, all the shops were shut. Although not a single vehicle was visible, Popanilla's progress was slow, from the quantity of shells of all kinds which choked up the public way. When he arrived at his hotel he found that all the windows were broken. He entered, and his landlord immediately presented him with his bill. As the landlord was pressing, and as Popanilla wished for an opportunity of showing his confidence in Skindeep's friendship, he requested him to pay the amount. Skindeep sent a messenger immediately to his banker, deeming an ambassador almost as good security as a nation, which we all know to be the very best.

This little arrangement being concluded, the landlord resumed his usual civility. He informed the travellers that the whole island was in a state of the greatest commotion, and that martial law universally prevailed. He said that this disturbance was occasioned by the return of the expedition destined to the Isle of Fantaisie. It appeared, from his account, that after sailing about from New Guinea to New Holland, the expedition had been utterly unable not only to reach their new customers, but even to obtain the slightest intelligence of their locality. No such place as Fantaisie was known at Ceylon. Sumatra gave information equally unsatisfactory. Java shook its head. Celebes conceived the enquirers were jesting. The Philippine Isles

offered to accommodate them with spices, but could assist them in no other way. Had it not been too hot at Bornco, they would have fairly laughed outright. The Maldives and the Moluccas, the Luccadives and the Andamans, were nearly as impertinent. The five hundred ships and the judiciously-assorted cargo were therefore under the necessity of returning home.

No sooner, however, had they reached Vraibleusia than the markets were immediately glutted with the unsold goods. All the manufacturers, who had been working day and night in preparing for the next expedition, were instantly thrown out of employ. A run commenced on the Government Bank. That institution perceived too late that the issues of pink shells had been too unrestricted. As the Emperor of the East had all the gold, the Government Bank only protected itself from failure by bayoneting its creditors. The manufacturers, who were starving, consoled themselves for the absence of food by breaking all the windows in the country with the discarded shells. Every tradesman failed. The shipping interest advertised two or three fleets for firewood. Riots were universal. The Aboriginal was attacked on all sides, and made so stout a resistance, and broke so many cudgels on the backs of his assailants, that it was supposed he would be finally exhausted by his own exertions. The public funds sunk ten per cent daily. All the Millionaires crashed. In a word, dismay, disorganisation, despair, pervaded in all directions the wisest, the greatest, and the richest nation in the world. The master of the hotel added, with an air of becoming embarrassment, that, had not his Excellency been fortunately absent, he probably would not have had the pleasure of detailing to him this little narrative, that he had often been enquired for by the populace at his old balcony; and that a crowd had perpetually surrounded the house till within the last day, when a report had got about that his Excellency had turned into steam and disappeared. He

added that caricatures of his Highness might be procured in any shop, and his account of his voyage obtained at less than half-price.

‘ Ah ! ’ said Popanilla, in a tone of great anguish, ‘ and all this from losing a lock of hair ! ’

At this moment the messenger whom Skindeep had despatched returned, and informed him with great regret that his banker, to whom he had entrusted his whole fortune, had been so unlucky as to stop payment during his absence. It was expected, however, that when his stock was sold a respectable dividend might be realised. This was the personage of prepossessing appearance who had presented Popanilla with a perpetual ticket to his picture gallery. On examining the banker’s accounts, it was discovered that his chief loss had been incurred by supporting that competition establishment where purses were bought full of crowns

In spite of his own misfortunes, Popanilla hastened to console his friend. He explained to him that things were not quite so bad as they appeared, that society consisted of two classes, those who laboured, and those who paid the labourers, that each class was equally useful, because, if there were none to pay, the labourers would not be remunerated, and if there were none to labour, the payers would not be accommodated, that Skindeep might still rank in one of these classes, that he might therefore still be a useful member of society, that, if he were useful, he must therefore be good, and that, if he were good, he must therefore be happy, because happiness is the consequence of assisting the beneficial development of the ameliorating principles of the social action

As he was speaking, two gentlemen in blue, with red waistcoats, entered the chamber and seized Popanilla by the collar. The Vraihleusian Government, which is so famous for its interpretation of National Law, had arrested the Ambassador for high treason.

Chapter XVII

A prison conveyed the most lugubrious ideas to the mind of the unhappy Plenipotentiary, and shut up in a hackney-coach, with a man on each side of him with a cocked pistol, he formed the most gloomy conceptions of dark dungeons, confined cells, overwhelming fetters, black bread, and green water. He arrived at the principal gaol in Hubbabub. He was ushered into an elegantly furnished apartment, with French sash windows and a piano. Its lofty walls were entirely hung with a fanciful paper, which represented a Tuscan vineyard, the ceiling was covered with sky and clouds; roses were in abundance, and the windows, though well secured, excited no jarring associations in the mind of the individual they illumined, protected, as they were, by polished bars of cut steel. This retreat had been fitted up by a poetical politician, who had recently been confined for declaring that the Statue was an old idol originally imported from the Sandwich Isles. Taking up a brilliantly bound volume which reposed upon a rosewood table, Popanilla recited aloud a sonnet to Liberty; but the account given of the goddess by the bard was so confused, and he seemed so little acquainted with his subject, that the reader began to suspect it was an effusion of the gaoler.

Next to being a Plenipotentiary, Popanilla preferred being a prisoner. His daily meals consisted of every delicacy in season; a marble bath was ever at his service; a billiard-room and dumb-bells always ready; and his old friend, the most eminent physician and the most celebrated practitioner in Hubbabub, called upon him daily to feel his pulse and look at his tongue. These attentions authorised a hope that he might yet again be an Ambassador, that his native land might still be discovered, and its resources still be developed; but when his gaoler told him that the rest of the prisoners were treated in

manner equally indulgent, because the Vraibleusians are the most humane people in the world, Popanilla's spirits became somewhat depressed

He was greatly consoled, however, by a daily visit from a body of the most beautiful, the most accomplished, and the most virtuous females in Hubbabub, who tasted his food to see that his cook did his duty, recommended him a plentiful use of pine-apple well peppered, and made him a present of a very handsome shirt, with worked collars and ruffles, to be hanged in. This enchanting committee generally confined their attentions to murderers and other victims of the passions, who were deserted in their hour of need by the rest of the society they had outraged, but Popanilla, being a foreigner, a Prince, and a Plenipotentiary, and not ill-looking, naturally attracted a great deal of notice from those who desire the anchorage of their species.

Popanilla was so pleased with his mode of life, and had acquired such a taste for poetry, pine-apples, and pepper since he had ceased to be an active member of society, that he applied to have his trial postponed, on the ground of the prejudice which had been excited against him by the public press. As his trial was at present inconvenient to the Government, the postponement was allowed on these grounds.

In the meantime, the public agitation was subsiding. The nation reconciled itself to the revolution in its fortunes. The *ci-devant* millionaires were busied with retrenchment, the Government engaged in sweeping in as many pink shells as were lying about the country, the mechanics contrived to live upon chalk and sea-weed, and as the Aboriginal would not give his corn away gratis, the Vraibleusians determined to give up bread. The intellectual part of the nation were intently interested in discovering the cause of the National Distress. One of the philosophers said that it might all be traced to the effects of a war in which the Vraibleusians had engaged about a century before. Another

showed that it was altogether clearly ascribable to the pernicious custom of issuing pink shells, but if, instead of this mode of representing wealth, they had had recourse to blue shells, the nation would now have advanced to a state of prosperity which it had never yet reached. A third demonstrated to the satisfaction of himself and his immediate circle that it was all owing to the Statue having recently been repaired with silver instead of iron. The public were unable to decide between these conflicting opinions; but they were still more desirous of finding out a remedy for the evil than the cause of it.

An eloquent and philosophical writer, who entertains consolatory opinions of human nature, has recently told us that 'it is in the nature of things that the intellectual wants of society should be supplied. Whenever the man is required invariably the man will appear.' So it happened in the present instance. A public instructor jumped up in the person of Mr. Flummery Flam, the least insinuating and the least plausible personage that ever performed the easy task of gulling a nation. His manners were vulgar, his voice was sharp, and his language almost unintelligible. Flummery Flam was a provisional optimist. He maintained that everything would be for the best, if the nation would only follow his advice. He told the Vraibleusians that the present universal and overwhelming distress was all and entirely and merely to be ascribed to 'a slight over-trading,' and that all that was required to set everything right again was 'a little time.' He showed that this over-trading and every other injudicious act that had ever been committed were entirely to be ascribed to the nation being imbued with erroneous and imperfect ideas of the nature of Demand and Supply. He proved to them that if a tradesman cannot find customers his goods will generally stay upon his own hands. He explained to the Aboriginal the meaning of *rent*, to the mechanics the nature of *wages*, to the manufacturers the signification of *profits*. He recommended

that a large edition of his own work should be printed at the public expense and sold for his private profit. Finally, he explained how immediate, though temporary, relief would be afforded to the State by the encouragement of EMIGRATION.

The Vraibleusians began to recover their spirits. The Government had the highest confidence in Flummery Flam, because Flummery Flam served to divert the public thoughts. By his direction lectures were instituted at the corner of every street, to instil the right principles of politics into the mind of the great body of the people. Every person, from the Managers of the Statue down to the chalk-chewing mechanics, attended lectures on Flummery-Flammism. The Vraibleusians suddenly discovered that it was the great object of a nation not to be the most powerful, or the richest, or the best, or the wisest, but to be the most Flummery-Flamnustical.

Chapter XVIII

The day fixed for Popanilla's trial was at hand. The Prince was not unprepared for the meeting. For some weeks before the appointed day he had been deeply studying the published speeches of the greatest rhetorician that flourished at the Vraibleusian bar. He was so inflated with their style that he nearly blew down the gaoler every morning when he rehearsed a passage before him. Indeed, Popanilla looked forward to his trial with feelings of anticipated triumph. He determined boldly and fearlessly to state the principles upon which his public conduct had been founded, the sentiments he professed on most of the important subjects which interest mankind, and the views he entertained of the progress of society. He would then describe, in the most glowing language, the domestic happiness which he enjoyed in his native isle. He would paint, in harrowing

sentences, the eternal misery and disgrace which ignominious execution would entail upon the grey-haired father, who looked up to him as a prop for his old the affectionate mother, who perceived in him her husband again a youth ; the devoted wife, who could never survive his loss , and the sixteen children, chiefly girls, whose death would infallibly send upon the parish. Thus, an eulogistic peroration on the moral qualities of Vraibleusians and the political importance of Vraible would, he had no doubt, not only save his neck, but gain him a moderate pension

The day arrived, the Court was crowded, and Pop had the satisfaction of observing in the newspaper tickets for the best gallery to witness his execution selling at a premium.

The indictment was read. He listened to it with attention. To his surprise, he found himself accused of stealing two hundred and nineteen Camelopards. A lawyer now explained. He perceived that he had been misapprehended the whole of this time for another person. He could not contain himself. He burst into an exclamation. Before the judge, in a voice of mingled delight, humility and triumph, that it was possible he might be guilty of treason, because he was ignorant of what the crime consisted, but as for stealing two hundred and nineteen Camelopards, he declared that such a larceny was an impossibility, because he had never seen one such animal in the whole course of his life.

The judge was kind and considerate. He told the prisoner that the charge of stealing Camelopards was a fiction of law, that he had no doubt he had never seen one in the whole course of his life, nor in all probability any one in the whole Court. He explained to Pop that originally this animal greatly abounded in Vraible, but that the present Court, the highest and most ancient in the kingdom, had then been instituted for the purpose

of all those who molested or injured that splendid animal. The species, his lordship continued, had been long extinct, but the Vrablcusians, duly reverencing the institutions of their ancestors, had never presumed to abrogate the authority of the Camelopard Court, or invest any other with equal privileges. Therefore, his lordship added, in order to try you in this Court for a modern offence of high treason, you must first be introduced by fiction of law as a stealer of Camelopards, and then being *in præsentî regio*, in a manner, we proceed to business by a special power for the absolute offence. Popanilla was so confounded by the kindness of the judge and the clearness of his lordship's statement that he quite lost the thread of his peroration.

The trial proceeded. Everybody with whom Popanilla had conversed during his visit to Vrablcusia was subpoenaed against him, and the evidence was conclusive. Skindeep, who was brought up by a warrant from the King's Bench, proved the fact of Popanilla's landing, and that he had given himself out as a political exile, the victim of a tyrant, a corrupt aristocracy, and a misguided people. But, either from a secret feeling towards his former friend or from his aversion to answer questions, this evidence was on the whole not very satisfactory.

The bookseller proved the publication of that fatal volume whose deceptive and glowing statements were alone sufficient to ensure Popanilla's fate. It was in vain that the author avowed that he had never written a line of his own book. This only made his imposture more evident. The little philosopher with whom he had conversed at Lady Spirituelle's, and who, being a friend of Flummery Flam, had now obtained a place under Government, invented the most condemning evidence. The Marquess of Moustache sent in a state paper, desiring to be excused from giving evidence, on account of the delicate situation in which he had been placed with regard to the prisoner, but he referred them to his former private Secretary, who, he had no doubt,

would afford every information. Accordingly, the President of Fort Jobation, who had been brought over specially, finished the business.

The Judge, although his family had suffered considerably by the late madness for speculation, summed up in the most impartial manner. He told the jury, that, although the case was quite clear against the prisoner, they were bound to give him the advantage of every reasonable doubt. The foreman was about to deliver the verdict, when a trumpet sounded, and a Government messenger ran breathless into Court. Presenting a scroll to the presiding genius, he informed him that a remarkably able young man, recently appointed one of the Managers of the Statue, in consequence of the inconvenience which the public sustained from the innumerable quantity of edicts of the Statue at present in force, had last night consolidated them all into this single act, which, to render its operation still more simple, was gifted with a retrospective power for the last half century.

His lordship, looking over the scroll, passed a high eulogium upon the young consolidator, compared to whom, he said, Justinian was a country attorney. Observing, however, that the crime of high treason had been accidentally omitted in the consolidated legislation of Vraibleusia, he directed the jury to find the prisoner 'not guilty.' As in Vraibleusia the law believes every man's character to be perfectly pure until a jury of twelve persons finds the reverse, Popanilla was kicked out of court, amid the hootings of the mob, without a stain upon his reputation.

It was late in the evening when he left the court. Exhausted both in mind and body, the mischief being now done, and being totally unemployed, according to custom, he began to moralise. 'I begin to perceive,' said he, 'that it is possible for a nation to exist in too artificial a state; that a people may both think too much and do too much. All here exists in a state of exaggeration. The nation itself

professes to be in a situation in which it is impossible for any nation ever to be naturally placed. To maintain themselves in this false position, they necessarily have recourse to much destructive conduct and to many fictitious principles. And as the character of a people is modelled on that of their Government, in private life this system of exaggeration equally prevails, and equally produces a due quantity of ruinous actions and false sentiment ! In the meantime, I am starving, and dare not show my face in the light of day !

As he said this the house opposite was suddenly lit up, and the words 'EMIGRATION COMMITTEE' were distinctly visible on a transparent blind. A sudden resolution entered Popanilla's mind to make an application to this body. He entered the Committee-room, and took his place at the end of a row of individuals, who were severally examined. When it was his turn to come forward he began to tell his story from the beginning, and would certainly have got to the lock of hair had not the President enjoined silence. Popanilla was informed that the last Emigration-squadron was about to sail in a few minutes . and that, although the number was completed, his broad shoulders and powerful frame had gained him a place. He was presented with a spade, a blanket, and a hard biscuit, and in a quarter of an hour was quitting the port of Hubbahub

Once more upon the waters, yet once more !

As the Emigration-squadron quitted the harbour two large fleets hove in sight. The first was the expedition which had been despatched against the decapitating King of the North, and which now returned heavily laden with his rescued subjects. The other was the force which had flown to the preservation of the body of the decapitated King of the South, and which now brought back his Majesty embalmed, some Princes of the blood, and an emigrant Aristocracy

What became of the late Fantaisian Ambassador ; whether he were destined for Van Diemen's Land or for Canada , what rare adventures he experienced in Sydney, or Port Jackson, or Guelph City, or Goodrich Town ; and whether he discovered that man might exist in too natural a state, as well as in too artificial a one, will probably be discovered, if ever we obtain Captain Popanilla's Second Voyage.



IXION IN HEAVEN

ADVERTISEMENT

‘ Ixion, King of Thessaly, famous for its horses, married Dia, daughter of Deioneus, who, in consequence of his son-in-law’s non-fulfilment of his engagements, stole away some of his monarch’s steeds. Ixion concealed his resentment under the mask of friendship. He invited his father-in-law to a feast at Larissa, the capital of his kingdom, and when Deioneus arrived according to his appointment, he threw him into a pit which he had previously filled with burning coals. This treachery so irritated the neighbouring princes, that all of them refused to perform the usual ceremony, by which a man was then purified of murder, and Ixion was shunned and despised by all mankind. Jupiter had compassion upon him, carried him to heaven, and introduced him to the Father of the Gods. Such a favour, which ought to have awakened gratitude in Ixion, only served to inflame his bad passions; he became enamoured of Juno, and attempted to seduce her. Juno was willing to gratify the passion of Ixion, though, according to others,’ etc. *Classical Dictionary*, art ‘*Ixion*.’

IXION IN HEAVEN

PART I

I

THE thunder groaned, the wind howled, the rain fell in hissing torrents, impenetrable darkness covered the earth.

A blue and forky flash darted a momentary light over the landscape. A Doric temple rose in the centre of a small and verdant plain, surrounded on all sides by green and hanging woods.

‘Jove is my only friend,’ exclaimed a wanderer, as he muffled himself up in his mantle; ‘and were it not for the porch of his temple, this night, methinks, would complete the work of my loving wife and my dutiful subjects.’

The thunder died away, the wind sank into silence, the rain ceased, and the parting clouds exhibited the glittering crescent of the young moon. A sonorous and majestic voice sounded from the skies.

‘Who art thou that hast no other friend than Jove?’

‘One whom all mankind unite in calling a wretch.’

‘Art thou a philosopher?’

‘If philosophy be endurance. But for the rest, I was sometime a king, and am now a scatterling.’

‘How do they call thee?’

‘Ixion of Thessaly.’

‘Ixion of Thessaly ! I thought he was a happy man. I heard that he was just married.’

‘Father of Gods and men ! for I deem thee such, Thessaly is not Olympus. Conjugal felicity is only the portion of the Immortals !’

‘Hem ! What ! was Dia jealous, which is common , or false, which is commoner ; or both, which is commonest ?’

‘It may be neither. We quarrelled about nothing. Where there is little sympathy, or too much, the splitting of a straw is plot enough for a domestic tragedy I was careless, her friends stigmatised me as callous ; she cold, her friends styled her magnanimous. Public opinion was all on her side, merely because I did not choose that the world should interfere between me and my wife Dia took the world’s advice upon every point, and the world decided that she always acted rightly However, life is life, either in a palace or a cave I am glad you ordered it to leave off thundering’

‘A cool dog this And Dia left thee ?’

‘No ; I left her.’

‘What, craven ?’

‘Not exactly The truth is ’tis a long story I was over head and ears in debt’

‘Ah ! that accounts for everything. Nothing so harassing as a want of money ! But what lucky fellows you Mortals are with your *post-obits* ! We Immortals are deprived of this resource I was obliged to get up a rebellion against my father, because he kept me so short, and could not die’

‘You could have married for money. I did.’

‘I had no opportunity, there was so little female society in those days When I came out, there were no heiresses except the Parcæ, confirmed old maids , and no very rich dowager, except my grandmother, old Terra’

‘Just the thing, the older the better However, I married Dia, the daughter of Deioneus, with a prodigious

portion ; but after the ceremony the old gentleman would not fulfil his part of the contract without my giving up my stud Can you conceive anything more unreasonable ? I smothered my resentment at the time , for the truth is, my tradesmen all renewed my credit on the strength of the match, and so we went on very well for a year , but at last they began to smell a rat, and grew importunate I entreated Dia to interfere ; but she was a paragon of daughters, and always took the side of her father. If she had only been dutiful to her husband, she would have been a perfect woman. At last I invited Deioneus to the Larissa races, with the intention of conciliating him The unprincipled old man bought the horse that I had backed, and by which I intended to have redeemed my fortunes, and withdrew it My book was ruined. I dissembled my rage. I dug a pit in our garden, and filled it with burning coals As my father-in-law and myself were taking a stroll after dinner, the worthy Deioneus fell in, merely by accident Dia proclaimed me the murderer of her father, and, as a satisfaction to her wounded feelings, earnestly requested her subjects to decapitate her husband She certainly was the best of daughters There was no withstanding public opinion, an infuriated rabble, and a magnanimous wife at the same time. They surrounded my palace . I cut my way through the greasy-capped multitude, sword in hand, and gained a neighbouring Court, where I solicited my brother princes to purify me from the supposed murder If I had only murdered a subject, they would have supported me against the people ; but Deioneus being a crowned head, like themselves, they declared they would not countenance so immoral a being as his son-in-law And so, at length, after much wandering, and shunned by all my species, I am here, Jove, in much higher society than I ever expected to mingle ’

‘ Well, thou art a frank dog, and in a sufficiently severe

serape. The Gods must have pity on those for whom men have none. It is evident that Earth is too hot for thee at present, so I think thou hadst better come and stay a few weeks with us in Heaven'

'Take my thanks for hecatombs, great Jove Thou art, indeed, a God!'

'I hardly know whether our life will suit you. We dine at sunset, for Apollo is so much engaged that he cannot join us sooner and no dinner goes off well without him. In the morning you are your own master, and must find amusement where you can. Diana will show you some tolerable sport. Do you shoot?'

'No arrow surer. Fear not for me, Ægeochus. I am always at home. But how am I to get to you?'

'I will send Mereury, he is the best travelling companion in the world. What ho! my Eagle!'

The clouds joined, and darkness again fell over the earth

II

'So! tread softly. Don't be nervous. Are you sick?'

'A little nausea, 'tis nothing.'

'The novelty of the motion. The best thing is a beef-steak. We will stop at Taurus and take one.'

'You have been a great traveller, Mereury?'

'I have seen the world.'

'Ah! a wondrous spectacle. I long to travel.'

'The same thing over and over again. Little novelty and much change. I am wearied with exertion, and if I could get a pension would retire.'

'And yet travel brings wisdom.'

'It cures us of care. Seeing much we feel little, and learn how very petty are all those great affairs which cost us such anxiety.'

'I feel that already myself. Floating in this blue æther. what the devil is my wife to me, and her dirty earth! My

persecuting enemies seem so many pismires, and as for my debts, which have occasioned me so many brooding moments, honour and infamy, credit and beggary, seem to me alike ridiculous.'

'Your mind is opening, Ixion You will soon be a man of the world To the left, and keep clear of that star'

'Who lives there?'

'The Fates know, not I. Some low people who are trying to shine into notice. 'Tis a parvenu planet, and only sprung into space within this century. We do not visit them.'

'Poor devils! I feel hungry'

'All right We shall get into Heaven by the first dinner bolt You cannot arrive at a strange house at a better moment We shall just have time to dress I would not spoil my appetite by luncheon. Jupiter keeps a capital cook.'

'I have heard of Nectar and Ambrosia.'

'Poh! nobody touches them. They are regular old-fashioned celestial food, and merely put upon the side-table Nothing goes down in Heaven now but infernal cookery. We took our *chef* from Proserpine.'

'Were you ever in Hell?'

'Several times 'Tis the fashion now among the Olympians to pass the winter there.'

'Is this the season in Heaven?'

'Yes, you are lucky Olympus is quite full'

'It was kind of Jupiter to invite me'

'Ay! he has his good points. And, no doubt, he has taken a liking to you, which is all very well But be upon your guard He has no heart, and is as capricious as he is tyrannical.'

'Gods cannot be more unkind to me than men have been.'

'All those who have suffered think they have seen the

worst. A great mistake. However, you are now in the high road to preferment, so we will not be dull. There are some good fellows enough amongst us. You will like old Neptune'

'Is he there now?'

'Yes, he generally passes his summer with us. There is little stirring in the ocean at that season'

'I am anxious to see Mars'

'Oh! a brute, more a bully than a hero. Not at all in the best set. These mustachioed gentry are by no means the rage at present in Olympus. The women are all literary now, and Minerva has quite eclipsed Venus. Apollo is our hero. You must read his last work'

'I hate reading'

'So do I. I have no time, and seldom do anything in that way but glance at a newspaper. Study and action will not combine'

'I suppose I shall find the Goddesses very proud?'

'You will find them as you find women below, of different dispositions with the same object. Venus is a flirt, Minerva a prude, who fancies she has a correct taste and a strong mind, and Juno a politician. As for the rest, faint heart never won fair lady, take a friendly hint, and do not be alarmed'

'I fear nothing. My mind mounts with my fortunes. We are above the clouds. They form beneath us a vast and snowy region, dim and irregular, as I have sometimes seen them clustering upon the horizon's ridge at sunset, like a raging sea stilled by some sudden supernatural frost and frozen into form! How bright the air above us, and how delicate its fragrant breath! I scarcely breathe, and yet my pulses beat like my first youth. I hardly feel my being. A splendour falls upon your presence. You seem, indeed, a God! Am I so glorious? This, this is Heaven!'

III

The travellers landed on a vast flight of sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli. Ascending, they entered beautiful gardens, winding walks that yielded to the feet, and accelerated your passage by their rebounding pressure, fragrant shrubs covered with dazzling flowers, the fleeting tints of which changed every moment, groups of tall trees, with strange birds of brilliant and variegated plumage, singing and reposing in their sheeny foliage, and fountains of perfumes

Before them rose an illimitable and golden palace, with high spreading domes of pearl, and long windows of crystal. Around the huge portal of ruby was ranged a company of winged genii, who smiled on Mercury as he passed them with his charge

‘The father of Gods and men is dressing,’ said the son of Maia ‘I shall attend his toilet and inform him of your arrival. These are your rooms. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. I will call for you as I go down. You can be formally presented in the evening. At that time, inspired by liqueurs and his matchless band of wind instruments, you will agree with the world that Ægiochus is the most finished God in existence.’

IV

‘Now, Ixion, are you ready?’

‘Even so. What says Jove?’

‘He smiled, but said nothing. He was trying on a new robe. By this time he is seated. Hark! the thunder. Come on!’

They entered a cupolaed hall. Seats of ivory and gold were ranged round a circular table of cedar, inlaid with the campaigns against the Titans, in silver exquisitely worked, a nuptial present of Vulcan. The service of gold plate threw all the ideas of the King of Thessaly as to royal

magnificence into the darkest shade. The enormous plateau represented the constellations. Ixion viewed the father of Gods and men with great interest, who, however, did not notice him. He acknowledged the majesty of that countenance whose nod shook Olympus. Majestically robust and luxuriantly lusty, his tapering waist was evidently immortal, for it defied Time, and his splendid auburn curls, parted on his forehead with celestial precision, descended over cheeks glowing with the purple radiance of perpetual manhood.

The haughty Juno was seated on his left hand and Ceres on his right. For the rest of the company there was Neptune, Latona, Minerva, and Apollo, and when Mercury and Ixion had taken their places, one seat was still vacant.

‘Where is Diana?’ inquired Jupiter, with a frown.

‘My sister is hunting,’ said Apollo.

‘She is always too late for dinner,’ said Jupiter. ‘No habit is less Goddess-like.’

‘Godlike pursuits cannot be expected to induce Goddess-like manners,’ said Juno, with a sneer.

‘I have no doubt Diana will be here directly,’ said Latona, mildly.

Jupiter seemed pacified, and at that instant the absent guest returned.

‘Good sport, Di?’ inquired Neptune.

‘Very fair, uncle Mamma,’ continued the sister of Apollo, addressing herself to Juno, whom she ever thus styled when she wished to conciliate her, ‘I have brought you a new peacock.’

Juno was fond of pets, and was conciliated by the present.

‘Bacchus made a great noise about this wine, Mercury,’ said Jupiter, ‘but I think with little cause. What think you?’

‘It pleases me, but I am fatigued, and then all wine is agreeable.’

‘ You have had a long journey,’ replied the Thunderer.
 ‘ Ixion, I am glad to see you in Heaven.’

‘ Your Majesty arrived to-day ? ’ inquired Minerva, to whom the King of Thessaly sat next.

‘ Within this hour ’

‘ You must leave off talking of Time now,’ said Minerva, with a severe smile. ‘ Pray is there anything new in Greece ? ’

‘ I have not been at all in society lately.’

‘ No new edition of Homer ? I admire him exceedingly ’

‘ All about Greece interests me,’ said Apollo, who, although handsome, was a somewhat melancholy lack-a-daisical looking personage, with his shirt collar thrown open, and his long curls theatrically arranged ‘ All about Greece interests me I always consider Greece my peculiar property. My best poems were written at Delphi I travelled in Greece when I was young. I envy mankind ’

‘ Indeed ! ’ said Ixion.

‘ Yes . they at least can look forward to a termination of the ennui of existence, but for us Celestials there is no prospect Say what they like, Immortality is a bore ’

‘ You eat nothing, Apollo,’ said Ceres

‘ Nor drink,’ said Neptune

‘ To eat, to drink, what is it but to live , and what is life but death, if death be that which all men deem it, a thing insufferable, and to be shunned. I refresh myself now only with soda-water and biscuits. Ganymede, bring some ’

Now, although the *cuisine* of Olympus was considered perfect, the forlorn poet had unfortunately fixed upon the only two articles which were not comprised in its cellar or larder In Heaven, there was neither soda-water nor biscuits A great confusion consequently ensued ; but at length the bard, whose love of fame was only equalled by his horror of getting fat, consoled himself with a swan stuffed with truffles, and a bottle of strong Tenedos wine

‘What do you think of Homer?’ inquired Minerva of Apollo. ‘Is he not delightful?’

‘If you think so’

‘Nay. I am desirous of your opinion.’

‘Then you should not have given me yours, for your taste is too fine for me to dare to differ with it’

‘I have suspected, for some time, that you are rather a heretic.’

‘Why, the truth is,’ replied Apollo, playing with his rings, ‘I do not think much of Homer. Homer was not esteemed in his own age, and our contemporaries are generally our best judges. The fact is, there are very few people who are qualified to decide upon matters of taste. A certain set, for certain reasons, resolve to cry up a certain writer, and the great mass soon join in. All is cant. And the present admiration of Homer is not less so. They say I have borrowed a great deal from him. The truth is, I never read Homer since I was a child, and I thought of him then what I think of him now, a writer of some wild irregular power, totally deficient in taste. Depend upon it, our contemporaries are our best judges, and his contemporaries decided that Homer was nothing. A great poet cannot be kept down. Look at my case. Marsyas said of my first volume that it was pretty good poetry for a God, and in answer I wrote a satire, and flayed Marsyas alive. But what is poetry, and what is criticism, and what is life? Air. And what is Air? Do you know? I don’t. All is mystery, and all is gloom, and ever and anon from out the clouds a star breaks forth, and glitters, and that star is Poetry’

‘Splendid!’ exclaimed Minerva

‘I do not exactly understand you,’ said Neptune.

‘Have you heard from Proserpine, lately?’ inquired Jupiter of Ceres.

‘Yesterday,’ said the domestic mother. ‘They talk of soon joining us. But Pluto is at present so busy, owing to

the amazing quantity of wars going on now, that I am almost afraid he will scarcely be able to accompany her.'

Juno exchanged a telegraphic nod with Ceres. The Goddesses rose, and retired.

'Come, old boy,' said Jupiter to Ixion, instantly throwing off all his chivalric majesty. 'I drink your welcome in a magnum of Maraschino. Damn your poetry, Apollo, and Mercury give us one of your good stories.'

V

'Well! what do you think of him?' asked Juno

'He appears to have a fine mind,' said Minerva.

'Poh! he has very fine eyes,' said Juno.

'He seems a very nice, quiet young gentleman,' said Ceres.

'I have no doubt he is very amiable,' said Latona

'He must have felt very strange,' said Diana

VI

Hercules arrived with his bride Hebe; soon after the Graces dropped in, the most delightful personages in the world for a *sourée*, so useful and ready for anything. Afterwards came a few of the Muses, Thalia, Melpomene, and Terpsichore, famous for a charade or a proverb. Jupiter liked to be amused in the evening. Bacchus also came, but finding that the Gods had not yet left their wine, retired to pay them a previous visit.

VII

Ganymede announced coffee in the saloon of Juno. Jupiter was in superb good humour. He was amused by his mortal guest. He had condescended to tell one of his best stories in his best style, about Leda, not too scandalous, but gay.

'Those were bright days,' said Neptune

‘ We can remember,’ said the Thunderer, with a twinkling eye. ‘ These youths have fallen upon duller times. There are no fine women now Ixion, I drink to the health of your wife ’

‘ With all my heart, and may we never be nearer than we are at present ’

‘ Good ! i’faith , Apollo, your arm. Now for the ladies La, la, la, la ! la la, la, la ! ’

VIII

The Thunderer entered the saloon of Juno with that bow which no God could rival , all rose, and the King of Heaven seated himself between Ceres and Latona The melancholy Apollo stood apart, and was soon carried off by Minerva to an assembly at the house of Mnemosyne Mercury chatted with the Graces, and Bacchus with Diana The three Muses favoured the company with singing, and the Queen of Heaven approached Ixion

‘ Does your Majesty dance ? ’ she haughtily inquired

‘ On earth . I have few accomplishments even there, and none in Heaven ’

‘ You have led a strange life ! I have heard of your adventures ’

‘ A king who has lost his crown may generally gain at least experience.’

‘ Your courage is firm ’

‘ I have felt too much to care for much Yesterday I was a vagabond exposed to every pitiless storm, and now I am the guest of Jove While there is life there is hope, and he who laughs at Destiny will gain Fortune I would go through the past again to enjoy the present, and feel that, after all, I am my wife’s debtor, since, through her conduct, I can gaze upon you ’

‘ No great spectacle If that be all, I wish you better fortune ’

‘ I desire no greater ’

‘ You are moderate.’

‘ I am perhaps more unreasonable than you imagine.’

‘ Indeed ! ’

Their eyes met , the dark orbs of the Thessalian did not
quail before the flashing vision of the Goddess Juno grew
pale Juno turned away.



IXION IN HEAVEN

PART II

‘Others say it was only a cloud’

I

MERCURY and Ganymede were each lolling on an opposite couch in the antechamber of Olympus

‘It is wonderful,’ said the son of Maia, yawning

‘It is incredible,’ rejoined the cup-bearer of Jove, stretching his legs

‘A miserable mortal!’ exclaimed the God, elevating his eyebrows

‘A vile Thessalian!’ said the beautiful Phrygian, shrugging his shoulders

‘Not three days back an outcast among his own wretched species!’

‘And now commanding everybody in Heaven’

‘He shall not command me, though,’ said Mercury

‘Will he not?’ replied Ganymede ‘Why, what do you think? only last night, haik! here he comes’

The companions jumped up from their couches, a light laugh was heard. The cedar portal was flung open, and Ixion lounged in, habited in a loose morning robe, and kicking before him one of his slippers

‘Ah!’ exclaimed the King of Thessaly, ‘the very fellows I wanted to see!’ Ganymede, bring me some nectar; and,

Mercury, run and tell Jove that I shall not dine at home to-day.'

The messenger and the page exchanged looks of indignant consternation.

'Well! what are you waiting for?' continued Ixion, looking round from the mirror in which he was arranging his locks. The messenger and the page disappeared.

'So! this is Heaven,' exclaimed the husband of Dia, flinging himself upon one of the couches, 'and a very pleasant place too. These worthy Immortals required their minds to be opened, and I trust I have effectually performed the necessary operation. They wanted to keep me down with their dull old-fashioned celestial airs, but I fancy I have given them change for their talent. To make your way in Heaven you must command. These exclusives sink under the audacious invention of an inspiring mind. Jove himself is really a fine old fellow, with some notions too. I am a prime favourite, and no one is greater authority with Ægiocbus on all subjects, from the character of the fair sex or the pedigree of a courser, down to the cut of a robe or the flavour of a dish. Thanks, Ganymede,' continued the Thessalian, as he took the goblet from his returning attendant.

'I drink to your *bonnes fortunes*. Splendid! This nectar makes me feel quite immortal. By-the-bye, I hear sweet sounds. Who is in the Hall of Music?'

'The Goddesses, royal sir, practise a new air of Euterpe, the words by Apollo. 'Tis pretty, and will doubtless be very popular, for it is all about moonlight and the misery of existence.'

'I warrant it.'

'You have a taste for poetry yourself?' inquired Ganymede.

'Not the least,' replied Ixion.

'Apollo,' continued the heavenly page, 'is a great genius, though Marsyas said that he would never be a poet because

he was a god and had no heart. But do you think, sir, that a poet does indeed need a heart ?'

'I really cannot say. I know my wife always said I had a bad heart and worse head ; but what she meant, upon my honour I never could understand.'

'Minerva will ask you to write in her album'

'Will she indeed ! I am sorry to hear it, for I can scarcely scrawl my signature I should think that Jove himself cared little for all this nonsense'

'Jove loves an epigram He does not esteem Apollo's works at all Jove is of the classical school, and admires satire, provided there be no allusions to gods and kings.'

'Of course, I quite agree with him I remember we had a confounded poet at Larissa who proved my family lived before the deluge, and asked me for a pension. I refused him, and then he wrote an epigram asserting that I sprang from the veritable stones thrown by Deucalion and Pyrrha at the re-peopling of the earth, and retained all the properties of my ancestors'

'Ha, ha ! Hark ! there's a thunderbolt ! I must run to Jove'

'And I will look in on the musicians This way, I think ?'

'Up the ruby staircase, turn to your right, down the amethyst gallery. Farewell !'

'Good-bye, a lively lad that !'

II

The King of Thessaly entered the Hall of Music with its golden walls and crystal dome The Queen of Heaven was reclining in an easy chair, cutting out peacocks in small sheets of note paper. Minerva was making a pencil observation on a manuscript copy of the song. Apollo listened with deference to her laudatory criticisms. Another divine dame, standing by the side of Euterpe, who was seated by the harp, looked up as Ixion entered. The wild liquid

glance of her soft but radiant countenance denoted the famed Goddess of Beauty

Juno just acknowledged the entrance of Ixion by a slight and haughty inclination of the head, and then resumed her employment Minerva asked him his opinion of her amendment, of which he greatly approved. Apollo greeted him with a melancholy smile, and congratulated him on being mortal Venus complimented him on his visit to Olympus, and expressed the pleasure that she experienced in making his acquaintance

‘What do you think of Heaven?’ inquired Venus, in a soft still voice, and with a smile like summer lightning

‘I never found it so enchanting as at this moment,’ replied Ixion

‘A little dull? For myself, I pass my time chiefly at Cnidos. you must come and visit me there ’Tis the most charming place in the world ’Tis said, you know, that our onions are like other people’s roses We will take care of you, if your wife come’

‘No fear of that She always remains at home and piques herself on her domestic virtues, which means picking, and quarrelling with her husband’

‘Ah! I see you are a droll. Very good indeed. Well, for my part, I like a watering-place existence. Cnidos, Paphos, Cythera, you will usually find me at one of these places. I like the easy distraction of a career without any visible result At these fascinating spots your gloomy race, to whom, by-the-bye, I am exceedingly partial, appear emancipated from the wearing fetters of their regular, dull, orderly, methodical, moral, political, toiling existence I pride myself upon being the Goddess of Watering-places. You really must pay me a visit at Cnidos’

‘Such an invitation requires no repetition And Cnidos is your favourite spot?’

‘Why, it was so; but of late it has become so inundated with invalid Asiatics and valetudinarian Persians, that the

simultaneous influx of the handsome heroes who swarm in from the islands to look after their daughters, scarcely compensates for the annoying presence of their yellow faces and shaking limbs. No, I think, on the whole, Paphos is my favourite.'

'I have heard of its magnificent luxury.'

'Oh! 'tis lovely! Quite my idea of country life. Not a single tree! When Cyprus is very hot, you run to Paphos for a sea-breeze, and are sure to meet every one whose presence is in the least desirable. All the bores remain behind, as if by instinct.'

'I remember when we married, we talked of passing the honeymoon at Cythera, but Dia would have her waiting-maid and a handbox stuffed between us in the chariot, so I got sulky after the first stage, and returned by myself.'

'You were quite right. I hate handboxes: they are always in the way. You would have liked Cythera if you had been in the least in love. High rocks and green knolls, bowery woods, winding walks, and delicious sunsets. I have not been there much of late,' continued the Goddess, looking somewhat sad and serious, 'since—but I will not talk sentiment to Ixion.'

'Do you think, then, I am insensible?'

'Yes.'

'Perhaps you are right. We mortals grow callous.'

'So I have heard. How very odd!'

So saying, the Goddess glided away and saluted Mars, who at that moment entered the hall. Ixion was presented to the military hero, who looked fierce and bowed stiffly. The King of Thessaly turned upon his heel. Minerva opened her album, and invited him to inscribe a stanza.

'Goddess of Wisdom,' replied the King, 'unless you inspire me, the virgin page must remain pure as thyself. I can scarcely sign a decree.'

'Is it Ixion of Thessaly who says this; one who has seen so much, and, if I am not mistaken, has felt and thought so

much ? I can easily conceive why such a mind may desire to veil its movements from the common herd, but pray concede to Minerva the gratifying compliment of assuring her that she is the exception for whom this rule has been established ’

‘ I seem to listen to the inspired music of an oracle. Give me a pen ’

‘ Here is one, plucked from a sacred owl ’

‘ So ! I write. There ! Will it do ? ’

Minerva read the inscription .

I HAVE SEEN THE WORLD, AND MORE THAN THE WORLD
I HAVE STUDIED THE HEART OF MAN, AND NOW I
CONSORT WITH IMMORTALS THE FRUIT OF MY TREE
OF KNOWLEDGE IS PLUCKED, AND IT IS THIS,
‘ Adventures are to the Adventurous.’

Written in the Album of Minerva, by

Ixion in Heaven.

‘ ’Tis brief,’ said the Goddess, with a musing air, ‘ but full of meaning. You have a daring soul and pregnant mind ’

‘ I have dared much . what I may produce we have yet to see ’

‘ I must to Jove,’ said Minerva, ‘ to council. We shall meet again Farewell, Ixion ’

‘ Farewell, Glaucopis ’

The King of Thessaly stood away from the remaining guests, and leant with folded arms and pensive brow against a wreathed column. Mars listened to Venus with an air of deep devotion Euterpe played an inspiring accompaniment to their conversation. The Queen of Heaven seemed engrossed in the creation of her paper peacocks

Ixion advanced and seated himself on a couch near Juno His manner was divested of that reckless bearing and careless coolness by which it was in general distinguished.

He was, perhaps, even a little embarrassed. His ready tongue deserted him At length he spoke

‘Has your Majesty ever heard of the peacock of the Queen of Mesopotamia?’

‘No,’ replied Juno, with stately reserve, and then she added with an air of indifferent curiosity, ‘Is it in any way remarkable?’

‘Its breast is of silver, its wings of gold, its eyes of carbuncle, its claws of amethyst.’

‘And its tail?’ eagerly inquired Juno

‘That is a secret,’ replied Ixion. ‘The tail is the most wonderful part of all.’

‘Oh! tell me, pray tell me!’

‘I forget.’

‘No, no, no; it is impossible!’ exclaimed the animated Juno. ‘Provoking mortal!’ continued the Goddess. ‘Let me entreat you; tell me immediately.’

‘There is a reason which prevents me’

‘What can it be? How very odd! What reason can it possibly be? Now tell me, as a particular, a personal favour, I request you, do tell me.’

‘What! The tail or the reason? The tail is wonderful, but the reason is much more so. I can only tell one. Now choose.’

‘What provoking things these human beings are! The tail is wonderful, but the reason is much more so. Well then, the reason; no, the tail Stop, now, as a particular favour, pray tell me both. What can the tail be made of and what can the reason be? I am literally dying of curiosity.’

‘Your Majesty has cut out that peacock wrong,’ remarked Ixion. ‘It is more like one of Minerva’s owls.’

‘Who cares about paper peacocks, when the Queen of Mesopotamia has got such a miracle!’ exclaimed Juno; and she tore the labours of the morning to pieces, and threw away the fragments with vexation. ‘Now tell me instantly,

if you have the slightest regard for me, tell me instantly
What was the tail made of ? ’

‘ And you do not wish to hear the reason ? ’

‘ That afterwards Now ! I am all ears.’ At this moment
Ganymede entered, and whispered the Goddess, who rose
in evident vexation, and retired to the presence of Jove

III

The King of Thessaly quitted the Hall of Music. Moody, yet not uninfluenced by a degree of wild excitement, he wandered forth into the gardens of Olympus. He came to a beautiful green retreat surrounded by enormous cedars, so vast that it seemed they must have been coeval with the creation, so fresh and brilliant, you would have deemed them wet with the dew of their first spring. The turf, softer than down, and exhaling, as you pressed it, an exquisite perfume, invited him to recline himself upon this natural couch. He threw himself upon the aromatic herbage, and leaning on his arm, fell into a deep reverie.

Hours flew away, the sunshiny glades that opened in the distance had softened into shade

‘ Ixion, how do you do ? ’ inquired a voice, wild, sweet, and thrilling as a bird. The King of Thessaly started and looked up with the distracted air of a man roused from a dream, or from complacent meditation over some strange, sweet secret. His cheek was flushed, his dark eyes flashed fire, his brow trembled, his dishevelled hair played in the fitful breeze. The King of Thessaly looked up, and beheld a most beautiful youth.

Apparently, he had attained about the age of puberty. His stature, however, was rather tall for his age, but exquisitely moulded and proportioned. Very fair, his somewhat round cheeks were tinted with a rich but delicate glow, like the rose of twilight, and lighted by dimples that twinkled like stars. His large and deep-blue eyes sparkled

with exultation, and an air of ill-suppressed mockery quivered round his pouting lips. His light auburn hair, braided off his white forehead, clustered in massy curls on each side of his face, and fell in sunny torrents down his neck. And from the back of the beautiful youth there fluttered forth two wings, the tremulous plumage of which seemed to have been bathed in a sunset : so various, so radiant, and so novel were its shifting and wondrous tints ; purple, and crimson, and gold ; streaks of azure, dashes of orange and glossy black , now a single feather, whiter than light, and sparkling like the frost, stars of emerald and carbuncle, and then the prismatic blaze of an enormous brilliant ! A quiver hung at the side of the beautiful youth, and he leant upon a bow

‘ Oh ! god, for god thou must be ! ’ at length exclaimed Ixion. ‘ Do I behold the bright divinity of Love ? ’

‘ I am indeed Cupid,’ replied the youth , ‘ and am curious to know what Ixion is thinking about ’

‘ Thought is often bolder than speech ’

‘ Oracular, though a mortal ! You need not be afraid to trust me. My aid I am sure you must need. Who ever was found in a reverie on the green turf, under the shade of spreading trees, without requiring the assistance of Cupid ? Come ! be frank, who is the heroine ? Some love-sick nymph deserted on the far earth , or worse, some treacherous mistress, whose frailty is more easily forgotten than her charms ? ’Tis a miserable situation, no doubt. It cannot be your wife ? ’

‘ Assuredly not,’ replied Ixion, with energy

‘ Another man’s ? ’

‘ No ’

‘ What ! an obdurate maiden ? ’

Ixion shook his head.

‘ It must be a widow, then,’ continued Cupid, ‘ Who ever heard before of such a piece of work about a widow ! ’

‘ Have pity upon me, dread Cupid ! ’ exclaimed the King

of Thessaly, rising suddenly from the ground, and falling on his knee before the God. 'Thou art the universal friend of man, and all nations alike throw their incense on thy altars. Thy divine discrimination has not deceived thee I am in love, desperately, madly, fatally enamoured. The object of my passion is neither my own wife nor another man's In spite of all they have said and sworn, I am a moral member of society She is neither a maid nor a widow She is '

'What? what?' exclaimed the impatient deity.

'A Goddess!' replied the King.

'Wheugh!' whistled Cupid 'What! has my mischievous mother been indulging you with an innocent flirtation?'

'Yes; but it produced no effect upon me.'

'You have a stout heart, then Perhaps you have been reading poetry with Minerva, and are caught in one of her Platonic man-traps'

'She set one, but I broke away.'

'You have a stout leg, then But where are you, where are you? Is it Hebe? It can hardly be Diana, she is so cold. Is it a Muse, or is it one of the Graces?'

Ixion again shook his head.

'Come, my dear fellow,' said Cupid, quite in a confidential tone, 'you have told enough to make further reserve mere affectation Ease your heart at once, and if I can assist you, depend upon my exertions'

'Beneficent God!' exclaimed Ixion, 'if I ever return to Larissa, the brightest temple in Greece shall hail thee for its inspiring deity. I address thee with all the confiding frankness of a devoted votary. Know, then, the heroine of my reverie was no less a personage than the Queen of Heaven herself!'

'Juno! by all that is sacred!' shouted Cupid.

'I am here,' responded a voice of majestic melody. The stately form of the Queen of Heaven advanced from

a neighbouring bower. Ixion stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground, with a throbbing heart and burning cheeks. Juno stood motionless, pale, and astounded. The God of Love burst into excessive laughter.

‘A pretty pair,’ he exclaimed, fluttering between both, and laughing in their faces. ‘Truly a pretty pair. Well! I see I am in your way. Good-bye!’ And so saying, the God pulled a couple of arrows from his quiver, and with the rapidity of lightning shot one in the respective breasts of the Queen of Heaven and the King of Thessaly.

IV

The amethystine twilight of Olympus died away. The stars blazed with tints of every hue. Ixion and Juno returned to the palace. She leant upon his arm; her eyes were fixed upon the ground, they were in sight of the gorgeous pile, and yet she had not spoken. Ixion, too, was silent, and gazed with abstraction upon the glowing sky.

Suddenly, when within a hundred yards of the portal, Juno stopped, and looking up into the face of Ixion with an irresistible smile, she said, ‘I am sure you cannot now refuse to tell me what the Queen of Mesopotamia’s peacock’s tail was made of!’

‘It is impossible now,’ said Ixion. ‘Know, then, beautiful Goddess, that the tail of the Queen of Mesopotamia’s peacock was made of some plumage she had stolen from the wings of Cupid.’

‘And what was the reason that prevented you from telling me before?’

‘Because, beautiful Juno, I am the most discreet of men, and respect the secret of a lady, however trifling.’

‘I am glad to hear that,’ replied Juno, and they re-entered the palace.

Mercury met Juno and Ixion in the gallery leading to the grand banquetting hall.

‘I was looking for you,’ said the God, shaking his head. ‘Jove is in a sublime rage. Dinner has been ready this hour.’

The King of Thessaly and the Queen of Heaven exchanged a glance and entered the saloon. Jove looked up with a brow of thunder, but did not condescend to send forth a single flash of anger. Jove looked up and Jove looked down. All Olympus trembled as the father of Gods and men resumed his soup. The rest of the guests seemed nervous and reserved, except Cupid, who said immediately to Juno, ‘Your Majesty has been detained?’

‘I fell asleep in a bower reading Apollo’s last poem,’ replied Juno. ‘I am lucky, however, in finding a companion in my negligence. Ixion, where have you been?’

‘Take a glass of nectar, Juno,’ said Cupid, with eyes twinkling with mischief; ‘and perhaps Ixion will join us.’

This was the most solemn banquet ever celebrated in Olympus. Every one seemed out of humour or out of spirits. Jupiter spoke only in monosyllables of suppressed rage, that sounded like distant thunder.

Apollo whispered to Minerva. Mercury never opened his lips, but occasionally exchanged significant glances with Ganymede. Mars compensated, by his attentions to Venus, for his want of conversation. Cupid employed himself in asking disagreeable questions. At length the Goddesses retired. Mercury exerted himself to amuse Jove, but the Thunderer scarcely deigned to smile at his best stories. Mars picked his teeth, Apollo played with his rings, Ixion was buried in a profound reverie.

VI

It was a great relief to all when Ganymede summoned them to the presenee of their late companions

‘I have written a eomment upon your inscription,’ said Minerva to Ixion, ‘and am anxious for your opinion of it.’

‘I am a wretched critie,’ said the King. breaking away from her. Juno smiled upon him in the distanee

‘Ixion,’ said Venus, as he passed by, ‘come and talk to me.’

The bold Thessalian blushed, he stammered out an unmeaning exeuse, he quitted the astonished but good-natured Goddess, and seated himself by Juno, and as he seated himself his moody brow seemed suddenly illumined with brilliant light.

‘Is it so?’ said Venus

‘Hem!’ said Minerva

‘Ha, ha!’ said Cupid

Jupiter played piquette with Mercury.

‘Everything goes wrong to-day,’ said the King of Heaven; ‘eards wretched, and kept waiting for dinner, and by a mortal!’

‘Your Majesty must not be surprised,’ said the good-natured Mereury, with whom Ixion was no favourite ‘Your Majesty must not be very much surprised at the conduit of this creature Considering what he is, and where he is, I am only astonished that his head is not more turned than it appears to be A man, a thing made of mud, and in Heaven! Only think, sire! Is it not enough to inflame the brain of any child of clay? To be sure, keeping your Majesty from dinner is little short of celestial high treason. I hardly expected that, indeed To order me about, to treat Ganymede as his own laequy, and, in short, to command the whole household, all this might be expected from such a person in such a situation. but I

confess I did think he had some little respect left for your Majesty.'

'And he does order you about, eh?' inquired Jove. 'I have the spades'

'Oh! 'tis quite ludicrous,' responded the son of Maia. 'Your Majesty would not expect from me the offices that this upstart daily requires.'

'Eternal destiny! is 't possible? That is my trick. And Ganymede, too?'

'Oh! quite shocking, I assure you, sire,' said the beautiful cupbearer, leaning over the chair of Jove with all the easy insolence of a privileged favourite. 'Really, sire, if Ixion is to go on in the way he does, either he or I must quit'

'Is it possible?' exclaimed Jupiter. 'But I can believe anything of a man who keeps me waiting for dinner Two and three make five'

'It is Juno that encourages him so,' said Ganymede.

'Does she encourage him?' inquired Jove.

'Everybody notices it,' protested Ganymede.

'It is indeed a little noticed,' observed Mercury.

'What business has such a fellow to speak to Juno?' exclaimed Jove. 'A mere mortal, a mere miserable mortal! You have the point How I have been deceived in this fellow! Who ever could have supposed that, after all my generosity to him, he would ever have kept me waiting for dinner?'

'He was walking with Juno,' said Ganymede 'It was all a sham about their having met by accident. Cupid saw them.'

'Ha!' said Jupiter, turning pale, 'you don't say so! Repiqued, as I am a God That is mine. Where is the Queen?'

'Talking to Ixion, sire,' said Mercury. 'Oh, I beg your pardon, sire; I did not know you meant the queen of diamonds'

‘Never mind. I am repiqued, and I have been kept waiting for dinner. Accursed be this day ! Is Ixion really talking to Juno ? We will not endure this.’

VII

‘Where is Juno ?’ demanded Jupiter

‘I am sure I cannot say,’ said Venus, with a smile

‘I am sure I do not know,’ said Minerva, with a sneer.

‘Where is Ixion ?’ said Cupid, laughing outright.

‘Mereury, Ganymede, find the Queen of Heaven instantly,’ thundered the father of Gods and men.

The celestial messenger and the heavenly page flew away out of different doors. There was a terrible, an immortal silence. Sublime rage lowered on the brow of Jove like a storm upon the mountain-top. Minerva seated herself at the card-table and played at Patience. Venus and Cupid tittered in the background. Shortly returned the envoys, Mercury looking solemn, Ganymede malignant

‘Well ?’ inquired Jove, and all Olympus trembled at the monosyllable

Mereury shook his head.

‘Her Majesty has been walking on the terrace with the King of Thessaly,’ replied Ganymede.

‘Where is she now, sir ?’ demanded Jupiter

Mereury shrugged his shoulders

‘Her Majesty is resting herself in the pavilion of Cupid, with the King of Thessaly,’ replied Ganymede.

‘Confusion !’ exclaimed the father of Gods and men, and he rose and seized a candle from the table, scattering the cards in all directions. Every one present, Minerva and Venus, and Mars and Apollo, and Mereury and Ganymede, and the Muses, and the Graces, and all the winged Genii each seized a candle, rifling the chandeliers, each followed Jove.

‘This way,’ said Mereury

‘ This way,’ said Ganymede.

‘ This way, this way ! ’ echoed the celestial crowd

‘ Mischief ! ’ cried Cupid , ‘ I must save my victims ’

They were all upon the terrace. The father of Gods and men, though both in a passion and a hurry, moved with dignity. It was, as customary in Heaven, a clear and starry night , but this eve Diana was indisposed, or otherwise engaged, and there was no moonlight They were in sight of the pavilion

‘ What are you ? ’ inquired Cupid of one of the Genn, who accidentally extinguished his candle

‘ I am a Cloud,’ answered the winged Genius.

‘ A Cloud ! Just the thing Now do me a shrewd turn, and Cupid is ever your debtor Fly, fly, pretty Cloud, and encompass yon pavilion with your form. Away ! ask no questions ; swift as my word ’

‘ I declare there is a fog,’ said Venus

‘ An evening mist in Heaven ! ’ said Minerva

‘ Where is Nox ? ’ said Jove ‘ Everything goes wrong. Who ever heard of a mist in Heaven ? ’

‘ My candle is out,’ said Apollo

‘ And mine, too,’ said Mars

‘ And mine, and mine, and mine,’ said Mercury and Ganymede, and the Muses and the Graces

‘ All the candles are out ! ’ said Cupid , ‘ a regular fog. I cannot even see the pavilion : it must be hereabouts, though,’ said the God to himself ‘ So, so ; I should be at home in my own pavilion, and am tolerably accustomed to stealing about in the dark. There is a step , and here, surely, is the lock. The door opens, but the Cloud enters before me. Juno, Juno,’ whispered the God of Love, ‘ we are all here. Be contented to escape, like many other innocent dames, with your reputation only under a cloud . it will soon disperse , and lo ! the heaven is clearing.’

‘ It must have been the heat of our flambeaux,’ said Venus , ‘ for see, the mist is vanished , here is the pavilion.’

Ganymede ran forward, and dashed open the door Ixion was alone.

‘Seize him!’ said Jove.

‘Juno is not here,’ said Mercury, with an air of blended congratulation and disappointment.

‘Never mind,’ said Jove, ‘seize him!’ He kept me waiting for dinner.’

‘Is this your hospitality, Ægioclus?’ exclaimed Ixion, in a tone of bullying innocence ‘I shall defend myself’

‘Seize him, seize him!’ exclaimed Jupiter ‘What! do you all falter? Are you afraid of a mortal?’

‘And a Thessalian?’ added Ganymede

No one advanced

‘Send for Hercules,’ said Jove

‘I will fetch him in an instant,’ said Ganymede

‘I protest,’ said the King of Thessaly, ‘against this violation of the most sacred rights’

‘The marriage tie?’ said Mercury

‘The dinner-hour?’ said Jove

‘It is no use talking sentiment to Ixion,’ said Venus, ‘all mortals are callous.’

‘Adventures are to the adventurous,’ said Minerva

‘Here is Hercules! here is Hercules!’

‘Seize him!’ said Jove; ‘seize that man’

In vain the mortal struggled with the irresistible demi-god

‘Shall I fetch your thunderbolt, Jove?’ inquired Ganymede

‘Anything short of eternal punishment is unworthy of a God,’ answered Jupiter, with great dignity ‘Apollo, bring me a wheel of your chariot’

‘What shall I do to-morrow morning?’ inquired the God of Light

‘Order an eclipse,’ replied Jove ‘Bind the insolent wretch to the wheel, hurl him to Hades, its motion shall be perpetual’

‘ What am I to bind him with ? ’ inquired Hercules

‘ The girdle of Venus,’ replied the Thunderer.

‘ What is all this ? ’ inquired Juno, advancing, pale and agitated.

‘ Come along ; you shall see,’ answered Jupiter. ‘ Follow me, follow me ’

They all followed the leader, all the Gods, all the Genii, in the midst, the brawny husband of Hebe bearing Ixion aloft, bound to the fatal wheel. They reached the terrace ; they descended the sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli. Hercules held his burthen on high, ready, at a nod, to plunge the hapless but presumptuous mortal through space into Hades. The heavenly group surrounded him, and peeped over the starry abyss. It was a fine moral, and demonstrated the usual infelicity that attends unequal connections.

‘ Celestial despot ! ’ said Ixion.

In a moment all sounds were hushed, as they listened to the last words of the unrivalled victim. Juno, in despair, leant upon the respective arms of Venus and Minerva.

‘ Celestial despot ! ’ said Ixion, ‘ I defy the immortal ingenuity of thy cruelty. My memory must be as eternal as thy torture : that will support me.’



THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE

Proserpine was the daughter of Jupiter and Ceres. Pluto, the God of Hell, became enamoured of her. His addresses were favoured by her father, but opposed by Ceres. Under these circumstances, he surprised her on the plains of Enna, and carried her off in his chariot.

THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE

PART I

I

IT was clearly a runaway match never indeed was such a sublime elopement. The four horses were coal-black, with blood-red manes and tails ; and they were shod with rubies. They were harnessed to a basaltic car by a single rein of flame. Waving his double-pronged trident in the air, the God struck the blue breast of Cyane, and the waters instantly parted. In rushed the wild chariot, the pale and insensible Proserpine clinging to the breast of her gum lover.

Through the depths of the hitherto unfathomed lake the infernal steeds held their breathless course. The car jolted against its bed. 'Save me !' exclaimed the future Queen of Hades, and she clung with renewed energy to the bosom of the dark bridegroom. The earth opened, they entered the kingdom of the Gnomes. Here Pluto was popular. The lurid populace gave him a loud shout. The chariot whirled along through shadowy cities and by dim highways, swarming with a busy race of shades.

'Ye flowery meads of Enna !' exclaimed the terrified Proserpine, 'shall I never view you again ? What an execrable climate !'

'Here, however, in-door nature is charming,' responded

Pluto. 'Tis a great nation of manufacturers. You are better, I hope, my Proserpine. The passage of the water is never very agreeable, especially to ladies'

'And which is our next stage?' inquired Proserpine

'The centre of Earth,' replied Pluto 'Travelling is so much improved that at this rate we shall reach Hades before night.'

'Alas!' exclaimed Proserpine, 'is not this night?'

'You are not unhappy, my Proserpine?'

'Beloved of my heart. I have given up everything for you! I do not repent, but I am thinking of my mother'

'Time will pacify the Lady Ceres. What is done cannot be undone. In the winter, when a residence among us is even desirable, I should not be surprised were she to pay us a visit'

'Her prejudices are so strong,' murmured the bride 'O! my Pluto, I hope your family will be kind to me.'

'Who could be unkind to Proserpine? Ours is a very domestic circle. I can assure you that everything is so well ordered among us that I have no recollection of a domestic broil'

'But marriage is such a revolution in a bachelor's establishment,' replied Proserpine, despondingly. 'To tell the truth, too, I am half frightened at the thought of the Furies. I have heard that their tempers are so violent'

'They mean well, their feelings are strong, but their hearts are in the right place. I flatter myself you will like my nieces, the Parææ. They are accomplished, and favourites among the men'

'Indeed!'

'Oh! quite irresistible'

'My heart misgives me. I wish you had at least paid them the compliment of apprising them of our marriage.'

'Cheer up. For myself, I have none but pleasant

anticipations. I long to be at home once more by my own fireside, and patting my faithful Cerberus.'

'I think I shall like Cerberus, I am fond of dogs'

'I am sure you will. He is the most faithful creature in the world.'

'Is he very fierce?'

'Not if he takes a fancy to you, and who can help taking a fancy to Proserpine?'

'Ah! my Pluto, you are in love.'

II

'Is this Hades?' inquired Proserpine.

An avenue of colossal bulls, sculptured in basalt and breathing living flame, led to gates of brass, adorned with friezes of rubies, representing the wars and discomfiture of the Titans. A crimson cloud concealed the height of the immense portal, and on either side hovered o'er the extending walls of the city, a watch-tower or a battlement occasionally flashing forth, and forcing their forms through the lurid obscurity.

'Queen of Hades! welcome to your capital!' exclaimed Pluto.

The monarch rose in his car and whirled a javelin at the gates. There was an awful clang, and then a still more terrible growl.

'My faithful Cerberus!' exclaimed the King.

The portals flew open, and revealed the gigantic form of the celebrated watch-dog of Hell. It completely filled their wide expanse. Who but Pluto could have viewed without horror that enormous body covered with shaggy spikes, those frightful paws clothed with claws of steel, that tail like a boa constrictor, those fiery eyes that blazed like the blood-red lamps in a pharos, and those three forked tongues, round each of which were entwined a vigorous family of green rattlesnakes!

‘ Ah ! Cerby ! Cerby ! ’ exclaimed Pluto ; ‘ my fond and faithful Cerby ! ’

Proserpine screamed as the animal gambolled up to the side of the chariot and held out its paw to its master. Then, licking the royal palm with its three tongues at once, it renewed its station with a wag of its tail which raised such a cloud of dust that for a few minutes nothing was perceptible.

‘ The monster ! ’ exclaimed Proserpine.

‘ My love,’ exclaimed Pluto, with astonishment

‘ The hideous brute ! ’

‘ My dear ! ’ exclaimed Pluto.

‘ He shall never touch me.’

‘ Proserpine ! ’

‘ Don’t touch me with that hand. You never shall touch me, if you allow that disgusting animal to lick your hand ’

‘ I beg to inform you that there are few beings of any kind for whom I have a greater esteem than that faithful and affectionate beast.’

‘ Oh ! if you like Cerberus better than me, I have no more to say,’ exclaimed the bride, bridling up with indignation

‘ My Proserpine is perverse.’ replied Pluto ; ‘ her memory has scarcely done me justice.’

‘ I am sure you said you liked Cerberus better than anything in the world,’ continued the Goddess, with a voice trembling with passion.

‘ I said no such thing,’ replied Pluto, somewhat sternly

‘ I see how it is,’ replied Proserpine, with a sob , ‘ you are tired of me.’

‘ My beloved ! ’

‘ I never expected this ’

‘ My child ! ’

‘ Was it for this I left my mother ? ’

‘ Powers of Hades ! How you can say such things ! ’

‘ Broke her heart ? ’

‘ Proserpine ! Proserpine ! ’

‘ Gave up daylight ? ’

‘ For the sake of Heaven, then, calm yourself ! ’

‘ Sacrificed everything ? ’

‘ My love ! my life ! my angel ! what is all this ? ’

‘ And then to be abused for the sake of a dog ! ’

‘ By all the shades of Hell, but this is enough to provoke even immortals. What have I done, said, or thought, to justify such treatment ? ’

‘ Oh ! me ! ’

‘ Proserpine ! ’

‘ Heigho ! ’

‘ Proserpine ! Proserpine ! ’

‘ So soon is the veil withdrawn ! ’

‘ Dearest, you must be unwell This journey has been too much for you.’

‘ On our very bridal day to be so treated ! ’

‘ Soul of my existence, don’t make me mad I love you I adore you ; I have no hope, no wish, no thought but you I swear it ; I swear it by my sceptre and my throne. Speak, speak to your Pluto : tell him all your wish, all your desire. What would you have me do ? ’

‘ Shoot that horrid beast.’

‘ Ah ! me ! ’

‘ What, you will not ! I thought how it would be I am Proserpine, your beloved, adored Proserpine You have no wish, no hope, no thought but for me ! I have only to speak, and what I desire will be instantly done ! And I do speak, I tell you my wish, I express to you my desire, and I am instantly refused ! And what have I requested ? Is it such a mighty favour ? Is it anything unreasonable ? Is there, indeed, in my entreaty anything so vastly out of the way ? The death of a dog, a disgusting animal, which has already shaken my nerves to pieces , and if ever (here she hid her face in his breast), if ever that event should occur which both must desire, my Pluto, I am sure the

very sight of that horrible beast will, I dare not say what it will do.'

Pluto looked puzzled.

'Indeed, my Proserpine, it is not in my power to grant your request, for Cerberus is immortal, like ourselves'

'Me! miserable!'

'Some arrangement, however, may be made to keep him out of your sight and hearing I can banish him'

'Can you, indeed? Oh! banish him, my Pluto! pray banish him! I never shall be happy until Cerberus is banished.'

'I will do anything you desire, but I confess to you I have some misgivings He is an invaluable watch-dog, and I fear, without his superintendence, the guardians of the gate will scarcely do their duty'

'Oh! yes. I am sure they will, my Pluto! I will ask them to, I will ask them myself, I will request them, as a particular and personal favour to myself, to be very careful indeed And if they do their duty, and I am sure they will, they shall be styled, as a reward, "Proserpine's Own Guards"'

'A reward, indeed!' said the enamoured monarch, as, with a sigh, he signed the order for the banishment of Cerberus in the form of his promotion to the office of Master of the royal and imperial blood-hounds.

III

The burning waves of Phlegethon assumed a lighter hue. It was morning It was the morning after the arrival of Pluto and his unexpected bride In one of the principal rooms of the palace three beautiful females, clothed in cerulean robes spangled with stars, and their heads adorned with golden crowns, were at work together. One held a distaff, from which the second spun, and the third wielded an enormous pair of adamantine shears, with which she

perpetually severed the labours of her sisters. Tall were they in stature and beautiful in form. Very fair, an expression of haughty serenity pervaded their majestic countenances. Their three companions, however, though apparently of the same sex, were of a different character. If women can ever be ugly, certainly these three ladies might put in a valid claim to that epithet. Their complexions were dark and withered, and their eyes, though bright, were bloodshot. Scantly clothed in black garments, not unstained with gore, their wan and offensive forms were but slightly veiled. Their hands were talons, their feet cloven; and serpents were wreathed round their brows instead of hair. Their restless and agitated carriage afforded also not less striking contrast to the polished and aristocratic demeanour of their companions. They paced the chamber with hurried and unequal steps, and wild and uncouth gestures; waving, with a reckless ferocity, burning torches and whips of scorpions. It is hardly necessary to add that these were the Furies, and that the conversation which I am about to report was carried on with the Fates.

‘A thousand serpents!’ shrieked Tisiphone. ‘I will never believe it.’

‘Racks and flames!’ squeaked Megæra. ‘It is impossible.’

‘Eternal torture!’ moaned Alecto. ‘’Tis a lie.’

‘Not Jupiter himself should convince us!’ the Furies joined in infernal chorus.

‘’Tis nevertheless true,’ calmly observed the beautiful Clotho.

‘You will soon have the honour of being presented to her,’ added the serene Lachesis.

‘And whatever we may feel,’ observed the considerate Atropos, ‘I think, my dear girls, you had better restrain yourselves.’

‘And what sort of thing is she?’ inquired Tisiphone, with a shriek,

‘I have heard that she is lovely,’ answered Clotho.
 ‘Indeed, it is impossible to account for the affair in any other way.’

‘Tis neither possible to account for nor to justify it,’ squeaked Megæra.

‘Is there, indeed, a Queen in Hell?’ moaned Aleeto.

‘We shall hold no more drawing-rooms,’ said Lachesis.

‘We will never attend hers,’ said the Furies.

‘You must,’ replied the Fates.

‘I have no doubt she will give herself airs,’ shrieked Tisiphone

‘We must remember where she has been brought up, and be considerate,’ replied Lachesis

‘I dare say you three will get on very well with her,’ squeaked Megæra. ‘You always get on well with people’

‘We must remember how very strange things here must appear to her,’ observed Atropos

‘No one can deny that there are some very disagreeable sights,’ said Clotho.

‘There is something in that,’ replied Tisiphone, looking in the glass, and arranging her serpents, ‘and for my part, poor girl, I almost pity her, when I think she will have to visit the Harpies.’

IV

At this moment four little pages entered the room, who, without exception, were the most hideous dwarfs that ever attended upon a monarch. They were clothed only in parti-coloured tunics, and their breasts and legs were quite bare. From the countenance of the first you would have supposed he was in a convulsion, his hands were clenched and his hair stood on end—this was Terror! The protruded veins of the second seemed ready to burst, and his rubicund visage decidedly proved that he had blood in his head. this was Rage! The third was of an ashen colour throughout. this was Paleness! And the fourth, with a countenancee

not without traces of beauty, was even more disgusting than his companions from the quantity of horrible flies, centipedes, snails, and other noisome, slimy, and indescribable monstrosities that were crawling all about his body and feeding on his decaying features. The name of this fourth page was Death !

‘ The King and Queen ! ’ announced the Pages

Pluto, during the night, had prepared Proserpine for the worst, and had endeavoured to persuade her that his love would ever compensate for all annoyances. She was in excellent spirits and in very good humour, therefore, though she could with difficulty stifle a scream when she recognised the Furies, she received the congratulations of the Parcæ with much cordiality.

‘ I have the pleasure, Proserpine, of presenting you to my family,’ said Pluto.

‘ Who, I am sure, hope to make Hades agreeable to your Majesty,’ rejoined Clotho. The Furies uttered a suppressed sound between a murmur and a growl.

‘ I have ordered the chariot,’ said Pluto. ‘ I propose to take the Queen a ride, and show her some of our lions.’

‘ She will, I am sure, be delighted,’ said Lachesis.

‘ I long to see Ixion,’ said Proserpine.

‘ The wretch ! ’ shrieked Tisiphone.

‘ I cannot help thinking that he has been very unfairly treated,’ said Proserpine.

‘ What ! ’ squeaked Megæra. ‘ The ravisher ! ’

‘ Ay ! it is all very well,’ replied Proserpine, ‘ but, for my part, if we knew the truth of that affair ’

‘ Is it possible that your Majesty can speak in such a tone of levity of such an offender ? ’ shrieked Tisiphone.

‘ Is it possible ? ’ moaned Alecto.

‘ Ah ! you have heard only one side of the question, but for my part, knowing as much of Juno as I do ’

‘ The Queen of Heaven ! ’ observed Atropos, with an intimidating glance.

‘ The Queen of Fiddlestick ! ’ said Proserpine , ‘ as great a flirt as ever existed, with all her prudish looks.’

The Fates and the Furies exchanged glances of astonishment and horror.

‘ For my part,’ continued Proserpine, ‘ I make it a rule to support the weaker side, and nothing will ever persuade me that Ixion is not a victim, and a pitiable one ’

‘ Well ! ’ men generally have the best of it in these affairs,’ said Lachesis, with a forced smile

‘ Juno ought to be ashamed of herself,’ said Proserpine ‘ Had I been in her situation, they should have tied me to a wheel first At any rate, they ought to have punished him in Heaven I have no idea of those people sending every *mauvais sujet* to Hell ’

‘ But what shall we do ? ’ inquired Pluto, who wished to turn the conversation

‘ Shall we turn out a sinner and hunt him for her Majesty’s diversion ? ’ suggested Tisiphone, flanking her serpents.

‘ Nothing of the kind will ever divert me,’ said Proserpine : ‘ for I have no hesitation in saying that I do not at all approve of these eternal punishments. or, indeed. of any punishment whatever ’

‘ The heretic ! ’ whispered Tisiphone to Megæra Allecto moaned

‘ It might be more interesting to her Majesty,’ said Atropos, ‘ to witness some of those extraordinary instances of predestined misery with which Hades abounds Shall we visit Œdipus ? ’

‘ Poor fellow ! ’ exclaimed Proserpine ‘ For myself, I willingly confess that Torture disgusts and Destiny puzzles me.’

The Fates and the Furies all alike started

‘ I do not understand this riddle of Destiny,’ continued the young Queen ‘ If you, Parcæ, have predestined that

a man should commit a crime, it appears to me very unjust that you should afterwards call upon the Furies to punish him for its commission.'

'But man is a free agent,' observed Lachesis, in as mild a tone as she could command

'Then what becomes of Destiny?' replied Proserpine.

'Destiny is eternal and irresistible,' replied Clotho. 'All is ordained, but man is, nevertheless, master of his own actions.'

'I do not understand that,' said Proserpine

'It is not meant to be understood,' said Atropos, 'but you must nevertheless believe it'

'I make it a rule only to believe what I understand,' replied Proserpine.

'It appears,' said Lachesis, with a blended glance of contempt and vengeance, 'that your Majesty, though a Goddess, is an Atheist.'

'As for that, anybody may call me just what they please, provided they do nothing else. So long as I am not tied to a wheel or whipped with scorpions for speaking my mind, I shall be as tolerant of the speech and acts of others as I expect them to be tolerant of mine. Come, Pluto, I am sure that the chariot must be ready!'

So saying, her Majesty took the arm of her spouse, and with a haughty curtesy left the apartment

'Did you ever!' shrieked Tisiphone, as the door closed.

'No! never!' squeaked Megæra.

'Never! never!' moaned Alecto

'She must understand what she believes, must she?'

said Lachesis, scarcely less irritated

'I never heard such nonsense,' said Clotho

'What next!' said Atropos

'Disgusted with Torture!' exclaimed the Furies.

'Puzzled with Destiny!' said the Fates.

It was the third morning after the Infernal Marriage ; the slumbering Proserpine reposed in the arms of the snoring Pluto There was a loud knocking at the chamber-door. Pluto jumped up in the middle of a dream.

‘ My life, what is the matter ? ’ exclaimed Proserpine

The knocking was repeated and increased There was also a loud shout of ‘ treason, murder, and fire ! ’

‘ What is the matter ? ’ exclaimed the God, jumping out of bed and seizing his trident ‘ Who is there ? ’

‘ Your pages, your faithful pages ! Treason ! treason ! For the sake of Hell, open the door. Murder, fire, treason ! ’

‘ Enter ! ’ said Pluto, as the door was unlocked

And Terror and Rage entered.

‘ You frightful things, get out of the room ! ’ cried Proserpine

‘ A moment, my angel ! ’ said Pluto, ‘ a single moment Be not alarmed, my best love , I pray you be not alarmed Well, imps, why am I disturbed ? ’

‘ Oh ! ’ said Terror. Rage could not speak, but gnashed his teeth and stamped his feet.

‘ O-o-o-h ! ’ repeated Terror

‘ Speak, cursed imps ! ’ cried the enraged Pluto , and he raised his arm

‘ A man ! a man ! ’ cried Terror. ‘ Treason, treason ! a man ! a man ! ’

‘ What man ? ’ said Pluto, in a rage

‘ A man, a live man, has entered Hell ! ’

‘ You don’t say so ? ’ said Proserpine ; ‘ a man, a live man Let me see him immediately ’

‘ Where is he ? ’ said Pluto , ‘ what is he doing ? ’

‘ He is here, there, and everywhere ! asking for your life, and singing like anything ’

the Proserpine ! ’ said Pluto, reproachfully , but, to do the justice, he was more astounded than jealous.

‘ I am sure I shall be delighted to see him ; it is so long since I have seen a live man,’ said Proserpine. ‘ Who can he be ? A man, and a live man ! How delightful ! It must be a messenger from my mother ’

‘ But how came he here ? ’

‘ Ah ! how came he here ? ’ echoed Terror.

‘ No time must be lost ! ’ exclaimed Pluto, scrambling on his robe. ‘ Seize him, and bring him into the council chamber. My charming Proserpine, excuse me for a moment ’

‘ Not at all ; I will accompany you.’

‘ But, my love, my sweetest, my own, this is business ; these are affairs of state. The council chamber is not a place for you.’

‘ And why not ? ’ said Proserpine ‘ I have no idea of ever leaving you for a moment. Why not for me as well as for the Fates and the Furies ? Am I not Queen ? I have no idea of such nonsense ! ’

‘ My love ! ’ said the deprecating husband.

‘ You don’t go without me,’ said the imperious wife, seizing his robe.

‘ I must,’ said Pluto

‘ Then you shall never return,’ said Proserpine.

‘ Enchantress ! be reasonable.’

‘ I never was, and I never will be,’ replied the Goddess

‘ Treason ! treason ! ’ screamed Terror.

‘ My love, I must go ! ’

‘ Pluto,’ said Proserpine, ‘ understand me once for all, I will not be contradicted.’

Rage stamped his foot.

‘ Proserpine, understand me once for all, it is impossible,’ said the God, frowning

‘ My Pluto ! ’ said the Queen ‘ Is it my Pluto who speaks thus sternly to me ? Is it he who, but an hour ago, a short hour ago, died upon my bosom in transports and stifled me with kisses ! Unhappy woman ! wretched,

miserable Proserpine ! Oh ! my mother ! my kind, my affectionate mother ! Have I disobeyed you for this ! For this have I deserted you ! For this have I broken your beloved heart !' She buried her face in the crimson counterpane, and bedewed its gorgeous embroidery with her fast-flowing tears

'Treason !' shouted Terror.

'Ha ! ha ! ha !' exclaimed the hysterical Proserpine

'What am I to do ?' cried Pluto 'Proserpine, my adored, my beloved, my enchanting Proserpine, compose yourself, for my sake, compose yourself I love you ! I adore you ! You know it ! oh ! indeed you know it !'

The hysterics increased

'Treason ! treason !' shouted Terror

'Hold your infernal tongue,' said Pluto 'What do I care for treason when the Queen is in this state ?' He knelt by the bedside, and tried to stop her mouth with kisses, and ever and anon whispered his passion 'My Proserpine, I beseech you to be calm, I will do anything you like Come, come, then, to the council !'

The hysterics ceased ; the Queen clasped him in her arms and rewarded him with a thousand embraces Then, jumping up, she bathed her swollen eyes with a beautiful cosmetic that she and her maidens had distilled from the flowers of Enna, and, wrapping herself up in her shawl, descended with his Majesty, who was quite as much puzzled about the cause of this disturbance as when he was first roused

VI

Crossing an immense covered bridge, the origin of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, over the royal gardens, which consisted entirely of cypress, the royal pair, preceded by the pages in waiting, entered the council chamber The council was already assembled On either side of a throne of sulphur, from which issued the four infernal rivers of

Lethe, Phlegethon, Cocytus, and Acheron, were ranged the Eumenides and the Parcæ. Lachesis and her sisters turned up their noses when they observed Proserpine; but the Eumenides could not stifle their fury, in spite of the hints of their more subdued but not less malignant companions

‘What is all this?’ inquired Pluto

‘The constitution is in danger,’ said the Parcæ in chorus

‘Both in church and state,’ added the Furies ‘’Tis a case of treason and blasphemy’, and they waved their torches and shook their whips with delighted anticipation of their use.

‘Detail the circumstances,’ said Pluto, waving his hand majestically to Lachesis, in whose good sense he had great confidence

‘A man, a living man, has entered your kingdom, unknown and unnoticed,’ said Lachesis

‘By my sceptre, is it true?’ said the astonished King. ‘Is he seized?’

‘The extraordinary mortal baffles our efforts,’ said Lachesis. ‘He bears with him a lyre, the charmed gift of Apollo, and so seducing are his strains that in vain our guards advance to arrest his course, they immediately begin dancing, and he easily eludes their efforts. The general confusion is indescribable. All business is at a standstill. Ixion rests upon his wheel; old Sisyphus sits down on his mountain, and his stone has fallen with a terrible plash into Acheron. In short, unless we are energetic, we are on the eve of a revolution.’

‘His purpose?’

‘He seeks yourself and her Majesty,’ added Lachesis, with a sneer

‘Immediately announce that we will receive him’

The unexpected guest was not slow in acknowledging the royal summons. A hasty treaty was drawn up, he was to enter the palace unmolested, on condition that he ceased

playing his lyre The Fates and the Furies exchanged significant glances as his approach was announced

The man, the live man, who had committed the unprecedented crime of entering Hell without a licence, and the previous deposit of his soul as security for the good behaviour of his body, stood before the surprised and indignant Court of Hades Tall and graceful in stature, and crowned with laurels, Proserpine was glad to observe that the man, who was evidently famous, was also good-looking

‘Thy purpose, mortal?’ inquired Pluto, with awful majesty

‘Mercy!’ answered the stranger in a voice of exquisite melody, and sufficiently embarrassed to render him interesting

‘What is mercy?’ inquired the Fates and the Furies

‘Speak, stranger, without fear,’ said Proserpine. ‘Thy name?’

‘Is Orpheus; but a few days back the too happy husband of the enchanting Eurydice Alas! dread King, and thou too, beautiful and benignant partner of his throne, I won her by my lyre, and by my lyre I would redeem her Know, then, that in the very glow of our gratified passion a serpent crept under the flowers on which we reposed, and by a fatal sting summoned my adored to the shades. Why did it not also summon me? I will not say why should I not have been the victim in her stead, for I feel too keenly that the doom of Eurydice would not have been less forlorn, had she been the wretched being who had been spared to life O King! they whispered on earth that thou too hadst yielded thy heart to the charms of love Pluto, they whispered, is no longer stern. Pluto also feels the all-subduing influence of beauty. Dread monarch, by the self-same passion that rages in our breasts alike, I implore thy mercy. Thou hast risen from the couch of love, the arm of thy adored has pressed upon thy heart, her homed lips have clung with rapture to thine, still echo in thy ears

all the enchanting phrases of her idolatry Then, by the memory of these, by all the higher and ineffable joys to which these lead, King of Hades, spare me, oh ' spare me, Eurydice ! '

Proserpine threw her arms round the neck of her husband, and, hiding her face in his breast, wept

' Rash mortal, you demand that which is not in the power of Pluto to concede,' said Lachesis

' I have heard much of treason since my entrance into Hades,' replied Orpheus, ' and this sounds like it '

' Mortal ! ' exclaimed Clotho, with contempt

' Nor is it in your power to return, sir,' said Tisiphone, shaking her whip.

' We have accounts to settle with you,' said Megæra.

' Spare her, spare her,' murmured Proserpine to her lover.

' King of Hades ! ' said Lachesis, with much dignity, ' I hold a responsible office in your realm, and I claim the constitutional privilege of your attention. I protest against the undue influence of the Queen. She is a power unknown in our constitution, and an irresponsible agent that I will not recognise Let her go back to the drawing-room, where all will bow to her.'

' Hag ! ' exclaimed Proserpine ' King of Hades, I, too, can appeal to you Have I accepted your crown to be insulted by your subjects ? '

' A subject, may it please your Majesty, who has duties as strictly defined by our infernal constitution as those of your royal spouse ; duties, too, which, let me tell you, Madam, I and *my order* are resolved to perform '

' Gods of Olympus ! ' cried Proserpine. ' Is this to be a Queen ? '

' Before we proceed further in this discussion,' said Lachesis, ' I must move an inquiry into the conduct of his Excellency the Governor of the Gates. I move, then, that Cerberus be summoned.'

Pluto started, and the blood rose to his dark cheek. 'I have not yet had an opportunity of mentioning,' said his Majesty, in a low tone, and with an air of considerable confusion, 'that I have thought fit, as a reward for his past services, to promote Cerberus to the office of the Master of the Hounds. He therefore is no longer responsible.'

'O h !' shrieked the Furies, as they elevated their hideous eyes.

'The constitution has invested your Majesty with a power in the appointment of your Officers of State which your Majesty has undoubtedly a right to exercise,' said Lachesis. 'What degree of discretion it anticipated in the exercise, it is now unnecessary, and would be extremely disagreeable, to discuss. I shall not venture to inquire by what new influence your Majesty has been guided in the present instance. The consequence of your Majesty's conduct is obvious, in the very difficult situation in which your realm is now placed. For myself and my colleagues, I have only to observe that we decline, under this crisis, any further responsibility, and the distaff and the shears are at your Majesty's service the moment your Majesty may find convenient successors to the present holders. As a last favour, in addition to the many we are proud to remember we have received from your Majesty, we entreat that we may be relieved from their burthen as quickly as possible.' (Loud cheers from the Eumenides)

'We had better recall Cerberus,' said Pluto, alarmed, 'and send this mortal about his business.'

'Not without Eurydice. Oh ! not without Eurydice,' said the Queen.

'Silence, Proserpine,' said Pluto.

'May it please your Majesty,' said Lachesis, 'I am doubtful whether we have the power of expelling any one from Hades. It is not less the law that a mortal cannot remain here, and it is too notorious for me to mention the fact that none here have the power of inflicting death.'

‘Of what use are all your laws,’ exclaimed Proserpine, ‘if they are only to perplex us? As there are no statutes to guide us, it is obvious that the King’s will is supreme. Let Orpheus depart, then, with his bride’

‘The latter suggestion is clearly illegal,’ said Lachesis.

‘Lachesis, and ye, her sisters,’ said Proserpine, ‘forget, I beseech you, any warm words that may have passed between us, and, as a personal favour to one who would willingly be your friend, release Eurydice. What! you shake your heads! Nay; of what importance can be a single miserable shade, and one, too, summoned so cruelly before her time, in these thickly-peopled regions?’

‘’Tis the principle,’ said Lachesis; ‘’tis the principle. Concession is ever fatal, however slight. Grant this demand; others, and greater, will quickly follow. Mercy becomes a precedent, and the realm is ruined.’

‘Ruined!’ echoed the Furies

‘And I say *preserved*!’ exclaimed Proserpine with energy. ‘The State is in confusion, and you yourselves confess that you know not how to remedy it. Unable to suggest a course, follow mine. I am the advocate of Mercy; I am the advocate of Concession, and, as you despise all higher impulses, I meet you on your own grounds. I am their advocate for the sake of policy, of expediency.’

‘Never!’ said the Fates.

‘Never!’ shrieked the Furies

‘What, then, will you do with Orpheus?’

The Parcæ shook their heads, even the Eumenides were silent

‘Then you are unable to carry on the King’s government, for Orpheus must be disposed of, all agree to that. Pluto, reject these counsellors, at once insulting and incapable. Give me the distaff and the fatal shears. At once form a new Cabinet, and let the release of Orpheus and Eurydice be the basis of their policy.’ She threw her arms round his neck and whispered in his ear.

Pluto was perplexed, his confidence in the Pareæ was shaken. A difficulty had occurred with which they could not cope. It was true the difficulty had been occasioned by a departure from their own exclusive and restrictive policy. It was clear that the gates of Hell ought never to have been opened to the stranger; but opened they had been. Forced to decide, he decided on the side of *expediency*, and signed a decree for the departure of Orpheus and Eurydice. The Pareæ immediately resigned their posts, and the Furies walked off in a huff. Thus, on the third day of the Infernal Marriage. Pluto found that he had quarrelled with all his family, and that his ancient administration was broken up. The King was without a friend, and Hell was without a Government !



THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE

PART II

I

LET us change the scene from Hades to Olympus.

A chariot drawn by dragons hovered over that superb palace whose sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli were once pressed by the daring foot of Ixion. It descended into the beautiful gardens, and Ceres, stepping out, sought the presence of Jove.

‘Father of Gods and men,’ said the majestic mother of Proserpine, ‘listen to a distracted parent!’ All my hopes were centred in my daughter, the daughter of whom you have deprived me. Is it for this that I endured the pangs of childbirth? Is it for this that I suckled her on this miserable bosom? Is it for this that I tended her girlish innocence, watched with vigilant fondness the development of her youthful mind, and cultured with a thousand graces and accomplishments her gifted and unrivalled promise? to lose her for ever!’

‘Beloved Bona Dea,’ replied Jove, ‘calm yourself!’

‘Jupiter, you forget that I am a mother’

‘It is the recollection of that happy circumstance that alone should make you satisfied.’

‘Do you mock me? Where is my daughter?’

‘In the very situation you should desire. In her destiny all is fulfilled which the most affectionate mother could

hope. What was the object of all your care and all her accomplishments ? a good *partie*, and she has made one.'

'To reign in Hell !'

'“ Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven ” What ! would you have had her a cup-bearer, like Hebe, or a messenger, like Hermes ? Was the daughter of Jove and Ceres to be destined to a mere place in our household ! Lady ! she is the object of envy to half the Goddesses Bating our own bed, which she could not share, what lot more distinguished than hers ? Recollect that Goddesses, who desire a becoming match, have a very limited circle to elect from Even Venus was obliged to put up with Vulean It will not do to be too nice Thank your stars that she is not an old maid like Minerva '

'But Mars ? he loved her.'

'A young officer only with his half-pay, however good his connections, is surely not a proper mate for our daughter.'

'Apollo ?'

'I have no opinion of a literary son-in-law These scribblers are at present the fashion, and are very well to ask to dinner, but I confess a more intimate connection with them is not at all to my taste'

'I meet Apollo everywhere'

'The truth is, he is courted because every one is afraid of him He is the editor of a daily journal, and under the pretence of throwing light upon every subject, brings a great many disagreeable things into notice, which is excessively inconvenient Nobody likes to be paragraphed, and for my part I should only be too happy to extinguish the Sun and every other newspaper were it only in my power.'

'But Pluto is so old, and so ugly, and, all agree, so ill-tempered.'

'He has a splendid income, a magnificent estate ; his settlements are worthy of his means. This ought to satisfy

a mother ; and his political influence is necessary to me, and this satisfies a father.'

' But the heart '

' As for that, she fancies she loves him , and whether she do or not, these feelings, we know, never last. Rest assured, my dear Ceres, that our girl has made a brilliant match, in spite of the gloomy atmosphere in which she has to reside.'

' It must end in misery. I know Proserpine. I confess it with tears, she is a spoiled child.'

' This may occasion Pluto many uneasy moments , but that is nothing to you or me. Between ourselves, I shall not be at all surprised if she plague his life out.'

' But how can she consort with the Fates ? How is it possible for her to associate with the Furies ? She, who is used to the gayest and most amiable society in the world ? Indeed, indeed, 'tis an ill-assorted union !'

' They are united, however ; and, take my word for it, my dear madam, that you had better leave Pluto alone. The interference of a mother-in-law is proverbially never very felicitous.'

II

In the meantime affairs went on swimmingly in Tartarus. The obstinate Fates and the sulky Furies were unwittingly the cause of universal satisfaction. Every one enjoyed himself, and enjoyment when it is unexpected is doubly satisfactory. Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Ixion, for the first time during their punishment, had an opportunity for a little conversation

' Long live our reforming Queen,' said the ex-king of Lydia ' You cannot conceive, my dear companions, anything more delightful than this long-coveted draught of cold water ; its flavour far surpasses the memory of my choicest wines And as for this delicious fruit, one must live in a hot climate, like our present one, sufficiently to

appreciate its refreshing gust. I would, my dear friends, you could only share my banquet.'

'Your Majesty is very kind,' replied Sisyphus, 'but it seems to me that nothing in the world will ever induce me again to move. One must have toiled for ages to comprehend the rapturous sense of repose that now pervades my exhausted frame. Is it possible that that damned stone can really have disappeared?'

'You say truly,' said Ixion, 'the couches of Olympus cannot compare with this resting wheel.'

'Noble Sisyphus,' rejoined Tantalus, 'we are both of us acquainted with the cause of our companion's presence in these infernal regions, since his daring exploit has had the good fortune of being celebrated by one of the fashionable authors of this part of the world.'

'I have never had time to read his work,' interrupted Ixion 'What sort of a fellow is he?'

'One of the most conceited dogs that I ever met with,' replied the King 'He thinks he is a great genius, and perhaps he has some little talent for the extravagant'

'Are there any critics in Hell?'

'Myriads They abound about the marshes of Cocytus, where they croak furiously. They are all to a man against our author.'

'That speaks more to his credit than his own self-opinion,' rejoined Ixion

'*A nos moutons !*' exclaimed Tantalus ; 'I was about to observe that I am curious to learn for what reason our friend Sisyphus was doomed to his late terrible exertions'

'For the simplest in the world,' replied the object of the inquiry , 'because I was not a hypocrite No one ever led a pleasanter life than myself, and no one was more popular in society. I was considered, as they phrased it, the most long-headed prince of my time, and was in truth a finished man of the world I had not an acquaintance whom I had not taken in, and gods and men alike favoured me In an

unlucky moment, however, I offended the infernal deities, and it was then suddenly discovered that I was the most abandoned character of my age. You know the rest '

' You seem,' exclaimed Tantalus, ' to be relating my own history , for I myself led a reckless career with impunity, until some of the Gods did me the honour of dining with me, and were dissatisfied with the repast. I am convinced myself that, provided a man frequent the temples, and observe with strictness the sacred festivals, such is the force of public opinion, that there is no crime which he may not commit without hazard.'

' Long live hypocrisy ! ' exclaimed Ixion. ' It is not my forte. But if I began life anew, I would be more observant in my sacrifices '

' Who could have anticipated this wonderful revolution ! ' exclaimed Sisyphus, stretching himself. ' I wonder what will occur next ! Perhaps we shall be all released '

' You say truly,' said Ixion ' I am grateful to our reforming Queen , but I have no idea of stopping here. This cursed wheel indeed no longer whirls , but I confess my expectations will be much disappointed if I cannot free myself from these adamantine bonds that fix me to its orb '

' And one cannot drink water for ever,' said Tantalus.

' D n all half measures,' said Ixion. ' We must proceed in this system of amelioration.'

' Without doubt,' responded his companion

' The Queen must have a party,' continued the audacious lover of Juno. ' The Fates and the Furies never can be conciliated It is evident to me that she must fall unless she unhinds these chains of mine.'

' And grants me full liberty of egress and regress,' exclaimed Sisyphus.

' And me a bottle of the finest golden wine of Lydia,' said Tantalus.

III

The infernal honeymoon was over. A cloud appeared in the hitherto serene heaven of the royal lovers. Proserpine became unwell. A mysterious languor pervaded her frame, her accustomed hilarity deserted her. She gave up her daily rides; she never quitted the palace, scarcely her chamber. All day long she remained lying on a sofa, and whenever Pluto endeavoured to console her she went into hysterics. His Majesty was quite miserable, and the Fates and the Furies began to hold up their heads. The two court physicians could throw no light upon the complaint, which baffled all their remedies. These, indeed, were not numerous, for the two physicians possessed each only one idea. With one every complaint was nervous; the other traced everything to the liver. The name of the first was Dr. Blue-Devil, and of the other Dr. Blue-Pill. They were most eminent men.

Her Majesty getting worse every day, Pluto, in despair, determined to send for Æsculapius. It was a long way to send for a physician, but then he was the most fashionable one in the world. He cared not how far he travelled to visit a patient, because he was paid by the mile; and it was calculated that his fee for quitting earth, and attending the Queen of Hell, would allow him to leave off business.

What a wise physician was Æsculapius! Physic was his abhorrence. He never was known, in the whole course of his practice, ever to have prescribed a single drug. He was a handsome man, with a flowing beard curiously perfumed, and a robe of the choicest purple. He twirled a cane of agate, round which was twined a serpent of precious stones, the gift of Juno, and he rode in a chariot drawn by horses of the Sun. When he visited Proserpine, he neither examined her tongue nor felt her pulse, but gave

her an account of a fancy ball which he had attended the last evening he passed on *terra firma*. His details were so interesting that the Queen soon felt better. The next day he renewed his visit, and gave her an account of a new singer that had appeared at Ephesus. The effect of this recital was so satisfactory, that a bulletin in the evening announced that the Queen was convalescent. The third day Æsculapius took his departure, having previously enjoined change of scene for her Majesty, and a visit to the Elysian Fields !

IV

‘ Heh, heh ! ’ shrieked Tisiphone.

‘ Hah, hah ! ’ squeaked Megæra.

‘ Hoh, hoh ! ’ moaned Alecto.

‘ Now or never,’ said the infernal sisters. ‘ There is a decided reaction. The moment she embarks, unquestionably we will flare up.’ So they ran off to the Fates.

‘ We must be prudent,’ said Clotho.

‘ Our time is not come,’ remarked Lachesis.

‘ I wish the reaction was more decided,’ said Atropos ; ‘ but it is a great thing that they are going to be parted, for the King must remain.’

The opposition party, although aiming at the same result, was therefore evidently divided as to the means by which it was to be obtained. The sanguine Furies were for fighting it out at once, and talked bravely of the strong conservative spirit only dormant in Tartarus. Even the Radicals themselves are dissatisfied. Tantalus is no longer contented with water, or Ixion with repose. But the circumspect Fates felt that a false step at present could never be regained. They talked, therefore, of watching events. Both divisions, however, agreed that the royal embarkation was to be the signal for renewed intrigues and renovated exertions.

When Proserpine was assured that she must be parted for a time from Pluto, she was inconsolable. They passed the night in sorrowful embraces. She vowed that she could not live a day without him, and that she certainly should die before she reached the first post. The mighty heart of the King of Hades was torn to pieces with contending emotions. In the agony of his overwhelming passion the security of his realm seemed of secondary importance compared with the happiness of his wife. Fear and hatred of the Paræ and the Eumenides equalled, however, in the breast of Proserpine, her affection for her husband. The consciousness that his absence would be a signal for a revolution, and that the crown of Tartarus might be lost to her expected offspring, animated her with a spirit of heroism. She reconciled herself to the terrible separation, on condition that Pluto wrote to her every day.

‘Adieu ! my best, my only beloved !’ ejaculated the unhappy Queen ; ‘do not forget me for a moment , and let nothing in the world induce you to speak to any of those horrid people. I know them , I know exactly what they will be at . the moment I am gone they will commence their intrigues for the restoration of the reign of doom and torture. Do not listen to them, my Pluto. Sooner than have recourse to them, seek assistance from their former victims.’

‘Calm yourself, my Proserpine. Anticipate no evil. I shall be firm , do not doubt me. I will cling with tenacity to that *juste milieu* under which we have hitherto so eminently prospered. Neither the Paræ and the Eumenides, nor Ixion and his friends, shall advance a point. I will keep each faction in awe by the bugbear of the other’s supremacy. Trust me, I am a profound politician.’

VI

It was determined that the progress of Proserpine to the Elysian Fields should be celebrated with a pomp and magnificence becoming her exalted station. The day of her departure was proclaimed as a high festival in Hell. Tiresias, absent on a secret mission, had been summoned back by Pluto, and appointed to attend her Majesty during her journey and her visit, for Pluto had the greatest confidence in his discretion. Besides, as her Majesty had not at present the advantage of any female society, it was necessary that she should be amused, and Tiresias, though old, ugly, and blind, was a wit as well as a philosopher, the most distinguished diplomatist of his age, and considered the best company in Hades.

An immense crowd was assembled round the gates of the palace on the morn of the royal departure. With what anxious curiosity did they watch those huge brazen portals ! Every precaution was taken for the accommodation of the public. The streets were lined with troops of extraordinary stature, whose nodding plumes prevented the multitude from catching a glimpse of anything that passed, and who cracked the skulls of the populace with their scimitars if they attempted in the slightest degree to break the line. Moreover, there were seats erected which any one might occupy at a reasonable rate ; but the lord steward, who had the disposal of the tickets, purchased them all for himself, and then resold them to his fellow-subjects at an enormous price.

At length the hinges of the gigantic portals gave an ominous creak, and, amid the huzzas of men and the shrieks of women, the procession commenced.

First came the infernal band. It consisted of five hundred performers, mounted on different animals. Never was such a melodious blast. Fifty trumpeters, mounted on zebras of all possible stripes and tints, and working away

at huge ramshorns with their cheeks like pumpkins. Then there were bassoons mounted on bears, clarionets on camelopards, oboes on unicorns, and troops of musicians on elephants, playing on real serpents, whose prismatic bodies indulged in the most extraordinary convolutions imaginable, and whose arrowy tongues glittered with superb agitation at the exquisite sounds which they unintentionally delivered. Animals there were, too, now unknown and forgotten, but I must not forget the fellow who beat the kettledrums, mounted on an enormous mammoth, and the din of whose reverberating blows would have deadened the thunder of Olympus.

This enchaining harmony preceded the regiment of Proserpine's own guards, glowing in adamantine armour and mounted on coal-black steeds. Their helmets were quite awful, and surmounted by plumes plucked from the wings of the Harpies, which were alone enough to terrify an earthly host. It was droll to observe this troop of gigantic heroes commanded by infants, who, however, were arrayed in a similar costume, though, of course, on a smaller scale. But such was the admirable discipline of the infernal forces, that, though lions to their enemies, they were lambs to their friends, and on the present occasion their colonel was carried in a cradle.

After these came twelve most worshipful baboons, in most venerable wigs. They were clothed with scarlet robes lined with ermine, and ornamented with gold chains, and mounted on the most obstinate and inflexible mules in Tartarus. These were the judges. Each was provided with a pannier of choice cobnuts, which he cracked with great gravity, throwing the shells to the multitude, an infernal ceremony, there held emblematic of their profession.

The Lord Chancellor came next in a grand car. Although his wig was even longer than those of his fellow functionaries, his manners and the rest of his costume afforded a strange contrast to them. Apparently never was such a

droll, lively fellow. His dress was something between that of Harlequin and Scaramouch. He amused himself by keeping in the air four brazen balls at the same time, swallowing daggers, spitting fire, turning sugar into salt, and eating yards of pink ribbon, which, after being well digested, re-appeared through his nose. It is unnecessary to add, after this, that he was the most popular Lord Chancellor that had ever held the seals, and was received with loud and enthusiastic cheers, which apparently repaid him for all his exertions. Notwithstanding his numerous and curious occupations, I should not omit to add that his Lordship, nevertheless, found time to lead by the nose a most meek and milk-white jackass that immediately followed him, and which, in spite of the remarkable length of its ears, seemed the object of great veneration. There was evidently some mystery about this animal difficult to penetrate. Among other characteristics, it was said, at different seasons, to be distinguished by different titles; for sometimes it was styled 'The Public,' at others 'Opinion,' and occasionally was saluted as the 'King's Conscience.'

Now came a numerous company of Priests, in flowing and funereal robes, bearing banners, inscribed with the various titles of their Queen; on some was inscribed Hecate, on others Juno Inferna, on others Theogamia, Libera on some, on others Cotyllo. Those that bore banners were crowned with wreaths of narcissus, and mounted on bulls blacker than night, and of a severe and melancholy aspect. Others walked by their side, bearing branches of cypress.

And here I must stop to notice a droll characteristic of the priestly economy of Hades. To be a good pedestrian was considered an essential virtue of an infernal clergyman, but to be mounted on a black bull was the highest distinction of the craft. It followed, therefore, that, originally, promotion to such a seat was the natural reward of any priest who had distinguished himself in the humbler career of a good walker; but in process of time, as even

infernal as well as human institutions are alike liable to corruption, the black bulls became too often occupied by the halt and the crippled, the feeble and the paralytic, who used their influence at Court to become thus exempted from the performance of the severer duties of which they were incapable. This violation of the priestly constitution excited at first great murmurs among the abler but less influential brethren. But the murmurs of the weak prove only the tyranny of the strong, and so completely in the course of time do institutions depart from their original character, that the imbecile riders of the black bulls now avowedly defended their position on the very grounds which originally should have unseated them, and openly maintained that it was very evident that the stout were intended to walk, and the feeble to be carried.

The priests were followed by fifty dark chariots, drawn by blue satyrs. Herein was the wardrobe of the Queen, and her Majesty's cooks.

Tiresias came next, in a basalt chariot, yoked to royal steeds. He was attended by Manto, who shared his confidence, and who, some said, was his daughter, and others his niece. Venerable seer! Who could behold that flowing beard, and the thin grey hairs of that lofty and wrinkled brow, without being filled with sensations of awe and affection? A smile of bland benignity played upon his passionless and reverend countenance. Fortunate the monarch who is blessed with such a counsellor! Who could have supposed that all this time Tiresias was concocting an epigram on Pluto!

The Queen! The Queen!

Upon a superb throne, placed upon an immense car, and drawn by twelve coal-black steeds, four abreast, reposed the royal daughter of Ceres. Her rich dark hair was braided off her high pale forehead, and fell in voluptuous clusters over her back. A tiara sculptured out of a single brilliant, and which darted a flash like lightning on the

surrounding multitude, was placed somewhat negligently on the right side of her head, but no jewels broke the entrancing swell of her swan-like neck, or were dimmed by the lustre of her ravishing arms. How fair was the Queen of Hell ! How thrilling the solemn lustre of her violet eye ! A robe, purple as the last hour of twilight, encompassed her transcendent form, studded with golden stars !

VII

Through the dim hot streets of Tartarus moved the royal procession, until it reached the first winding of the river Styx. Here an immense assemblage of yachts and barges, dressed out with the infernal colours, denoted the appointed spot of the royal embarkation. Tiresias dismounting from his chariot, and leaning on Manto, now approached her Majesty, and requesting her royal commands, recommended her to lose no time in getting on board

‘ When your Majesty is once on the Styx,’ observed the wily seer, ‘ it may be somewhat difficult to recall you to Hades ; but I know very little of Clotho, may it please your Majesty, if she have not already commenced her intrigues in Tartarus.’

‘ You alarm me ! ’ said Proserpine

‘ It was not my intention Caution is not fear.’

‘ But do you think that Pluto ’

‘ May it please your Majesty, I make it a rule never to think I know too much.’

‘ Let us embark immediately ! ’

‘ Certainly, I would recommend your Majesty to get off at once Myself and Manto will accompany you, and the cooks. If an order arrive to stay our departure, we can then send back the priests ’

‘ You counsel well, Tiresias I wish you had not been absent on my arrival. Affairs might have gone better.’

‘ Not at all. Had I been in Hell, your enemies would

have been more wary Your Majesty's excellent spirit carried you through triumphantly, but it will not do so twice. You turned them out, and I must keep them out'

'So be it, my dear friend' Thus saying, the Queen descended her throne, and leaving the rest of her retinue to follow with all possible despatch, embarked on board the infernal yacht, with Tiresias, Manto, the chief cook, and some chosen attendants, and bid adieu for the first time, not without agitation, to the gloomy banks of Tartarus.

VIII

The breeze was favourable, and, animated by the exhortations of Tiresias, the crew exerted themselves to the utmost. The barque swiftly scudded over the dark waters. The river was of great breadth, and in this dim region the crew were soon out of sight of land.

'You have been in Elysium?' inquired Proserpine of Tiresias

'I have been everywhere,' replied the seer, 'and though I am blind, have managed to see a great deal more than my fellows'

'I have often heard of you,' said the Queen, 'and I confess that yours is a career which has much interested me. What vicissitudes in affairs have you not witnessed? And yet you have somehow or other contrived to make your way through all the storms in which others have sunk, and are now, as you always have been, in an exalted position. What can be your magic? I would that you would initiate me. I know that you are a prophet, and that even the Gods consult you'

'Your Majesty is complimentary. I certainly have had a great deal of experience. My life has no doubt been a long one, but I have made it longer by never losing a moment. I was born, too, at a great crisis in affairs. Everything that took place before the Trojan war passes for nothing

in the annals of wisdom. That was a great revolution in all affairs human and divine, and from that event we must now date all our knowledge. Before the Trojan war we used to talk of the rebellion of the Titans, but that business now is an old almanac. As for my powers of prophecy, believe me, that those who understand the past are very well qualified to predict the future. For my success in life, it may be principally ascribed to the observance of a simple rule. I never trust any one, either God or man. I make an exception in favour of the Goddesses, and especially of your Majesty,' added Tiresias, who piqued himself on his gallantry.

While they were thus conversing, the Queen directed the attention of Manto to a mountainous elevation which now began to rise in the distance, and which, from the rapidity of the tide and the freshness of the breeze, they approached at a swift rate.

'Behold the Stygian mountains,' replied Manto. 'Through their centre runs the passage of Night which leads to the regions of Twilight.'

'We have, then, far to travel?'

'Assuredly it is no easy task to escape from the gloom of Tartarus to the sunbeams of Elysium,' remarked Tiresias; 'but the pleasant is generally difficult; let us be grateful that in our instance it is not, as usual, forbidden.'

'You say truly, I am sorry to confess how very often it appears to me that sin is enjoyment. But see! how awful are these perpendicular heights, piercing the descending vapours, with their peaks clothed with dark pines! We seem land-locked.'

But the experienced master of the infernal yacht knew well how to steer his charge through the intricate windings of the river, which here, though deep and navigable, became as wild and narrow as a mountain stream, and, as the tide no longer served them, and the wind, from their involved

course, was as often against them as in their favour, the crew were obliged to have recourse to their oars, and rowed along until they arrived at the mouth of an enormous cavern, from which the rapid stream apparently issued

‘ I am frightened out of my wits,’ exclaimed Proserpine
‘ Surely this cannot be our course ? ’

‘ I hold, from your Majesty’s exclamation,’ said Tiresias, ‘ that we have arrived at the passage of Night. When we have proceeded some hundred yards, we shall reach the adamantine portals I pray your Majesty be not alarmed I alone have the signet which can force these mystic gates to open I must be stirring myself What, ho ! Manto ’

‘ Here am I, father. Hast thou the seal ? ’

‘ In my breast I would not trust it to my secretaries. They have my portfolios full of secret despatches, written on purpose to deceive them, for I know that they are spies in the pay of Minerva, but your Majesty perceives, with a little prudence, that even a traitor may be turned to account ’

Thus saying, Tiresias, leaning on Manto, hobbled to the poop of the vessel, and exclaiming aloud, ‘ Behold the mighty seal of Dis, whereon is inscribed the word the Titans fear,’ the gates immediately flew open, revealing the gigantic form of the Titan Porphyryon, whose head touched the vault of the mighty cavern, although he was up to his waist in the waters of the river

‘ Come, my noble Porphyryon,’ said Tiresias, ‘ bestir thyself, I beseech thee I have brought thee a Queen. Guide her Majesty, I entreat thee, with safety through this awful passage of Night ’

‘ What a horrible creature,’ whispered Proserpine. ‘ I wonder you address him with such courtesy.’

‘ I am always courteous,’ replied Tiresias. ‘ How know I that the Titans may not yet regain their lost heritage ? ’

They are terrible fellows , and ugly or not, I have no doubt that even your Majesty would not find them so ill-favoured were they seated in the halls of Olympus.'

'There is something in that,' replied Proserpine. 'I almost wish I were once more in Tartarus.'

The Titan Porphyryon in the meantime had fastened a chain-cable to the vessel, which he placed over his shoulder, and turning his back to the crew, then wading through the waters, he dragged on the vessel in its course. The cavern widened, the waters spread. To the joy of Proserpine, apparently, she once more beheld the moon and stars.

'Bright crescent of Diana !' exclaimed the enraptured Queen, 'and ye too, sweet stars, that I have so often watched on the Sicilian plains , do I, then, indeed again behold you ? or is it only some exquisite vision that entrances my being ? for, indeed, I do not feel the freshness of that breeze that was wont to renovate my languid frame ; nor does the odorous scent of flowers wafted from the shores delight my jaded senses. What is it ? Is it life or death , earth, indeed, or hell ?'

'Tis nothing,' said Tiresias, 'but a great toy. You must know that Saturn until at length, wearied by his ruinous experiments, the Gods expelled him his empire was a great dabbler in systems. He was always for making moons brighter than Dian, and lighting the stars by gas , but his systems never worked. The tides rebelled against their mistress, and the stars went out with a horrible stench. This is one of his creations, the most ingenious, though a failure. Jove made it a present to Pluto, who is quite proud of having a sun and stars of his own, and reckons it among the choice treasures of his kingdoms.'

'Poor Saturn ! I pity him , he meant well '

'Very true. He is the paviour of the high-street of Hades. But we cannot afford kings, and especially Gods, to be philosophers. The certainty of misrule is better than the chance of good government ; uncertainty makes people restless.'

‘I feel very restless myself, I wish we were in Elysium!’

‘The river again narrows!’ exclaimed Manto ‘There is no other portal to pass. The Saturnian moon and stars grow fainter, there is a grey tint expanding in the distance, ’tis the realm of Twilight, your Majesty will soon disembark.’



THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE

PART III

I

Containing an account of Tiresias at his Rubber

TRAVELLERS who have left their homes generally grow mournful as the evening draws on, nor is there, perhaps, any time at which the pensive influence of twilight is more predominant than on the eve that follows a separation from those we love. Imagine, then, the feelings of the Queen of Hell, as her barque entered the very region of that mystic light, and the shadowy shores of the realm of Twilight opened before her. Her thoughts reverted to Pluto; and she mused over all his fondness, all his adoration, and all his indulgence, and the infinite solicitude of his affectionate heart, until the tears trickled down her beautiful cheeks, and she marvelled she ever could have quitted the arms of her lover

‘Your Majesty,’ observed Manto, who had been whispering to Tiresias, ‘feels, perhaps, a little wearied?’

‘By no means, my kind Manto,’ replied Proserpine, starting from her reverie. ‘But the truth is, my spirits are unequal; and though I really cannot well fix upon the cause of their present depression, I am apparently not free from the contagion of the surrounding gloom’

‘It is the evening air,’ said Tiresias. ‘Your Majesty

had perhaps better re-enter the pavilion of the yacht. As for myself, I never venture about after sunset. One grows romantic. Night was evidently made for in-door nature. I propose a rubber.'

To this popular suggestion Proserpine was pleased to accede, and herself and Tiresias, Manto and the captain of the yacht, were soon engaged at the proposed amusement.

Tiresias loved a rubber. It was true he was blind, but then, being a prophet, that did not signify. Tiresias, I say, loved a rubber, and was a first-rate player, though, perhaps, given a little too much to *finesse*. Indeed, he so much enjoyed taking in his fellow-creatures, that he sometimes could not resist deceiving his own partner. Whist is a game which requires no ordinary combination of qualities, at the same time, memory and invention, a daring fancy, and a cool head. To a mind like that of Tiresias, a pack of cards was full of human nature. A rubber was a microcosm, and he ruffed his adversary's king, or brought in a long suit of his own with as much dexterity and as much enjoyment as, in the real business of existence, he dethroned a monarch, or introduced a dynasty.

'Will your Majesty be pleased to draw your card?' requested the sage. 'If I might venture to offer your Majesty a hint, I would dare to recommend your Majesty not to play before your turn. My friends are fond of ascribing my success in my various missions to the possession of peculiar qualities. No such thing. I owe everything to the simple habit of always waiting till it is my turn to speak. And believe me, that he who plays before his turn at whist, commits as great a blunder as he who speaks before his turn during a negotiation.'

'The trick, and two by honours,' said Proserpine. 'Pray, my dear Tiresias, you who are such a fine player, how came you to trump my best card?'

'Because I wanted the lead. And those who want to

lead, please your Majesty, must never hesitate about sacrificing their friends’

‘ I believe you speak truly. I was right in playing that thirteenth card ? ’

‘ Quite so Above all things, I love a thirteenth card. I send it forth, like a mock project in a revolution, to try the strength of parties.’

‘ You should not have forced me, Lady Manto,’ said the Captain of the yacht, in a grumbling tone, to his partner. ‘ By weakening me, you prevented me bringing in my spades. We might have made the game ’

‘ You should not have been forced,’ said Tiresias. ‘ If she made a mistake, who was unacquainted with your plans, what a terrible blunder you committed to share her error without her ignorance ! ’

‘ What, then, was I to lose a trick ? ’

‘ Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity,’ replied Tiresias, ‘ the most important thing in life is to know when to forego an advantage.’

‘ I have cut you an honour, sir,’ said Manto.

‘ Which reminds me,’ replied Tiresias, ‘ that, in the last hand, your Majesty unfortunately forgot to lead through your adversary’s ace. I have often observed that nothing ever perplexes an adversary so much as an appeal to his honour ’

‘ I will not forget to follow your advice,’ said the Captain of the yacht, playing accordingly.

‘ By which you have lost the game,’ quietly remarked Tiresias. ‘ There are exceptions to all rules, but it seldom answers to follow the advice of an opponent.’

‘ Confusion ! ’ exclaimed the Captain of the yacht.

‘ Four by honours, and the trick, I declare,’ said Proserpine. ‘ I was so glad to see you turn up the queen, Tiresias.’

‘ I also, Madam. Without doubt there are few cards better than her royal consort, or, still more, the imperial

ace. Nevertheless, I must confess, I am perfectly satisfied whenever I remember that I have the Queen on my side.'

Proserpine bowed

II

Containing a Visit from a liberal Queen to a dethroned Monarch, and a Conversation between them respecting the 'Spirit of the Age.'

'I have a good mind to do it, Tiresias,' said Queen Proserpine, as that worthy sage paid his compliments to her at her toilet, at an hour which should have been noon

'It would be a great compliment,' said Tiresias.

'And it is not much out of our way?'

'By no means,' replied the seer 'Tis an agreeable half-way house He lives in good style.'

'And whence can a dethroned monarch gain a revenue?'

inquired the Queen.

'Your Majesty, I see, is not at all learned in politics. A sovereign never knows what an easy income is till he has abdicated He generally commences squabbling with his subjects about the supplies, he is then expelled, and voted, as compensation, an amount about double the sum which was the cause of the original quarrel'

'What do you think, Manto?'

said Proserpine, as that lady entered the cabin; 'we propose paying a visit to Saturn He has fixed his residence, you know, in these regions of twilight'

'I love a junket,' replied Manto, 'above all things And, indeed, I was half frightened out of my wits at the bare idea of toiling over this desert. All is prepared, please your Majesty, for our landing Your Majesty's litter is quite ready'

'Tis well,' said Proserpine; and leaning on the arm of Manto, the Queen came upon deck, and surveyed the surrounding country, a vast grey flat, with a cloudless sky

of the same tint : in the distance some lowering shadows, which seemed like clouds but were in fact mountains.

‘ Some half-dozen hours,’ said Tiresias, ‘ will bring us to the palace of Saturn We shall arrive for dinner ; the right hour. Let me recommend your Majesty to order the curtains of your litter to be drawn, and, if possible, to resume your dreams ’

‘ They were not pleasant,’ said Proserpine, ‘ I dreamt of my mother and the Parcæ Manto, methinks I ’ll read. Hast thou some book ? ’

‘ Here is a poem, Madam, but I fear it may induce those very slumbers you dread ’

‘ How call you it ? ’

‘ “ The Pleasures of Oblivion.” The poet apparently is fond of his subject.’

‘ And is, I have no doubt, equal to it Hast any prose ?

‘ An historical novel or so.’

‘ Oh ! if you mean those things as full of costume as a fancy ball, and almost as devoid of sense, I ’ll have none of them. Close the curtains , even visions of the Furies are preferable to these insipidities ’

The halt of the litter roused the Queen from her slumbers ‘ We have arrived,’ said Manto, as she assisted in withdrawing the curtains

The train had halted before a vast propylon of rose-coloured granite The gate was nearly two hundred feet in height, and the sides of the propylon, which rose like huge moles, were sculptured with colossal figures of a threatening aspect Passing through the propylon, the Queen of Hell and her attendants entered an avenue in length about three-quarters of a mile, formed of colossal figures of the same character and substance, alternately raising in their arms javelms or battle-axes, as if about to strike At the end of this heroic avenue appeared the palace of Saturn Ascending a hundred steps of black marble, you stood before a portico supported by twenty columns of the same material and

shading a single portal of bronze. Apparently the palace formed an immense quadrangle, a vast tower rising from each corner, and springing from the centre a huge and hooded dome. A crowd of attendants, in grey and sad-coloured raiment, issued from the portal of the palace at the approach of Proserpine, who remarked with strange surprise their singular countenances and demeanour, for rare in this silent assemblage was any visage resembling aught she had seen, human or divine. Some bore the heads of bats, of owls and beetles others; some fluttered moth-like wings, while the shoulders of other bipeds were surmounted, in spite of their human organisation, with the heads of rats and weasels, of marten-eats and of foxes. But they were all remarkably civil, and Proserpine, who was now used to wonders, did not shriek at all, and scarcely shuddered.

The Queen of Hell was ushered through a superb hall, and down a splendid gallery, to a suite of apartments where a body of damsels of a most distinguished appearance awaited her. Their heads resembled those of the most eagerly-sought, highly-prized, and oftenest-stolen lap-dogs. Upon the shoulders of one was the visage of the smallest and most thorough-bred little Blenheim in the world. Upon her front was a white star, her nose was nearly flat, and her ears were tied under her chin, with the most jaunty air imaginable. She was an evident flirt; and a solemn prude of a spaniel, with a black and tan countenance, who seemed a sort of duenna, evidently watched her with no little distrust. The admirers of blonde beauties would, however, have fallen in love with a poodle, with the finest head of hair imaginable, and most voluptuous shoulders. This brilliant band began barking in the most insinuating tone on the appearance of the Queen, and Manto, who was almost as dexterous a linguist as Tiresias himself, informed her Majesty that these were the ladies of her bed-chamber; upon which Proserpine, who, it will be remembered,

had no passion for dogs, ordered them immediately out of her room.

‘What a droll place!’ exclaimed the Queen. ‘Do you know we are later than I imagined? A hasty toilet to-day; I long to see Saturn. It is droll, I am hungry. My purple velvet, I think, it may be considered a compliment. No diamonds, only jet; a pearl or two, perhaps. Didst ever see the King? They say he is gentlemanlike, though a bigot. No! no rouge to-day; this paleness is quite *apropos*. Were I as radiant as usual, I should be taken for Aurora.’

So leaning on Manto, and preceded by the ladies of her bed-chamber, whom, notwithstanding their repulse, she found in due attendance in the antechamber, Proserpine again continued her progress down the gallery, until they stopped at a door, which opening, she was ushered into the grand circular saloon, crowned by the dome, whose exterior the Queen had already observed. The interior of this apartment was entirely of black and grey marble, with the exception of the dome itself, which was of ebony, richly carved, and supported by more than a hundred columns. There depended from the centre of the arch a single chandelier of frosted silver, which was itself as big as an ordinary chamber, but of the most elegant form, and delicate and fantastic workmanship. As the Queen entered the saloon, a personage of venerable appearance, dressed in a suit of black velvet, and leaning on an ivory cane, advanced to salute her. There was no mistaking this personage, his manners were at once so courteous and so dignified. He was clearly their host, and Proserpine, who was quite charmed with his grey locks and his black velvet cap, his truly paternal air, and the beneficence of his unstudied smile, could scarcely refrain from bending her knee, and pressing her lips to his extended hand.

‘I am proud that your Majesty has remembered me in my retirement,’ said Saturn, as he led Proserpine to a seat.

Their mutual compliments were soon disturbed by the

announcement of dinner, and Saturn offering his arm to the Queen with an air of politeness which belonged to the old school, but which the ladies admire in old men, handed Proserpine to the banqueting-room. They were followed by some of the principal personages of her Majesty's suite, and a couple of young Titans, who enjoyed the posts of Aides-de-Camp to the ex-King, and whose duties consisted of carving at dinner.

It was a most agreeable dinner, and Proserpine was delighted with Saturn, who, of course, sat by her side, and paid her every possible attention. Saturn, whose manners, as has been observed, were of the old school, loved a good story, and told several. His anecdotes, especially of society previous to the Trojan war, were highly interesting. There ran through all his behaviour, too, a tone of high breeding and of consideration for others which was really charming. and Proserpine, who had expected to find in her host a gloomy bigot, was quite surprised at the truly liberal spirit with which he seemed to consider affairs in general. Indeed this unexpected tone made so great an impression upon her, that finding a good opportunity after dinner, when they were sipping their coffee apart from the rest of the company, she could not refrain from entering into some conversation with the ex-King upon the subject, and the conversation ran thus.

‘Do you know,’ said Proserpine, ‘that much as I have been pleased and surprised during my visit to the realms of twilight, nothing has pleased, and I am sure nothing has surprised me more, than to observe the remarkably liberal spirit in which your Majesty views the affairs of the day.’

‘You give me a title, beautiful Proserpine, to which I have no claim,’ replied Saturn. ‘You forget that I am now only Count Hesperus, I am no longer a king, and believe me, I am very glad of it.’

‘What a pity, my dear sir, that you would not condescend

to conform to the Spirit of the age. For myself, I am quite a reformer.'

'So I have understood, beautiful Proserpine, which I confess has a little surprised me; for to tell you the truth, I do not consider that reform is exactly *our* trade.'

'Affairs cannot go on as they used,' observed Proserpine, oracularly; 'we must bow to the Spirit of the age.'

'And what is that?' inquired Saturn

'I do not exactly know,' replied Proserpine, 'but one hears of it everywhere'

'I also heard of it a great deal,' replied Saturn, 'and was also recommended to conform to it. Before doing so, however, I thought it as well to ascertain its nature, and something also of its strength'

'It is terribly strong,' observed Proserpine.

'But you think it will be stronger?' inquired the ex-King

'Certainly; every day it is more powerful'

'Then if, on consideration, we were to deem resistance to it advisable, it is surely better to commence the contest at once than to postpone the struggle.'

'It is useless to talk of resisting; one must conform.'

'I certainly should consider resistance useless,' replied Saturn, 'for I tried it and failed, but at least one has a chance of success, and yet, having resisted this spirit and failed, I should not consider myself in a worse plight than you would voluntarily place yourself in by conforming to it'

'You speak riddles,' said Proserpine.

'To be plain, then,' replied Saturn, 'I think you may as well at once give up your throne, as conform to this spirit'

'And why so?' inquired Proserpine very ingenuously.

'Because,' replied Saturn, shrugging up his shoulders, 'I look upon the Spirit of the age as a spirit hostile to Kings and Gods.'

III

Containing the Titans , or a View of a subverted Faction

The next morning Saturn himself attended his beautiful guest over his residence, which Proserpine greatly admired.

‘ ’Tis the work of the Titans,’ replied the ex-King
‘ There never was a party so fond of building palaces.’

‘ To speak the truth,’ said Proserpine, ‘ I am a little disappointed that I have not had an opportunity, during my visit, of becoming acquainted with some of the chiefs of that celebrated party . for, although a Liberal, I am a female one, and I like to know every sort of person who is distinguished ’

‘ The fact is,’ replied her host, ‘ that the party has never recovered from the thunderbolt of that scheming knave Jupiter, and do not bear their defeat so philosophically as years, perhaps, permit me to do . If we have been vanquished by the Spirit of the age,’ continued Saturn, ‘ you must confess that, in our case, the conqueror did not assume a material form very remarkable for its dignity. Had Creation resolved itself into its original elements, had Chaos come again, or even old Cœlus, the indignity might have been endured , but to be baffled by an Olympian *juste milieu*, and to find, after all the clamour, that nothing has been changed save the places, is, you will own, somewhat mortifying ’

‘ But how do you reconcile,’ inquired the ingenuous Proserpine, ‘ the success of Jupiter with the character which you ascribed last night to the Spirit of the age ? ’

‘ Why, in truth,’ said Saturn, ‘ had I not entirely freed myself from all party feeling, I might adduce the success of my perfidious and worthless relative as very good demonstration that the Spirit of the age is nothing better than an *ignis fatuus* . Nevertheless, we must discriminate . Even the success of Jupiter, although he now conducts

himself in direct opposition to the emancipating principles he at first professed, is no less good evidence of their force ; for by his professions he rose. And, for my part, I consider it a great homage to public opinion to find every scoundrel now-a-days professing himself a Liberal.'

'You are candid,' said Proserpine. 'I should like very much to see the Titans.'

'My friends are at least consistent,' observed Saturn ; 'though certainly at present I can say little more for them. Between the despair of one section of the party, and the over-sanguine expectations of the other, they are at present quite inactive, or move only to ensure fresh rebuffs.'

'You see little of them, then ?'

'They keep to themselves · they generally frequent a lonely vale in the neighbourhood.'

'I should so like to see them !' exclaimed Proserpine.

'Say nothing to Tiresias,' said old Saturn, who was half in love with his fair friend, 'and we will steal upon them unperceived.' So saying, the God struck the earth with his cane, and there instantly sprang forth a convenient ear, built of curiously carved cedar, and borne by four enormous tawny-coloured owls. Seating himself by the side of the delighted Proserpine, Saturn commanded the owls to bear them to the Valley of Lamentations.

'Twas an easy fly · the chariot soon descended upon the crest of a hill : and Saturn and Proserpine, leaving the ear, commenced, by a winding path, the slight ascent of a superior elevation. Having arrived there, they looked down upon a valley, apparently land-locked by black and barren mountains of the most strange, although picturesque forms. In the centre of the valley was a black pool or tarn, bordered with dark purple flags of an immense size, twining and twisting among which might be observed the glancing and gliding folds of several white serpents, while crocodiles and alligators, and other horrible forms, poked their foul snouts with evident delight in a vast mass of black

slime, which had, at various times, exuded from the lake. A single tree only was to be observed in this desolate place, an enormous and blasted cedar, with scarcely a patch of verdure, but extending its black and barren branches nearly across the valley. Seated on a loosened crag, but leaning against the trunk of the cedar, with his arms folded, his mighty eyes fixed on the ground, and his legs crossed with that air of complete repose which indicates that their owner is in no hurry again to move them, was

*A form, some granite god we deemed,
Or king of palmy Nile, colossal shapes
Such as Syene's rosy quarries yield
To Memphuan art ; Horus. Osiris called,
Or Amenoph, who, on the Theban plain,
With magic melody the sun salutes ,
Or he, far mightier. to whose conquering car
Monarchs were yoked, Rameses : by the Greeks
Sesostris styled And yet no sculptor's art
Moulded this shape, for form it seemed of flesh,
Yet motionless , its dim unlustrous orbs
Gazing in stilly vacancy, its cheek
Grey as its hairs, which, thin as they might seem,
No breath disturbed ; a solemn countenance,
Not sorrowful, though full of woe sublime,
As if despair were now a distant dream
Too dim for memory.*

‘ ’Tis their great leader,’ said Saturn, as he pointed out the Titan to Proserpine, ‘ the giant Enceladus. He got us into all our scrapes, but I must do him the justice to add, that he is the only one who can ever get us out of them. They say he has no heart ; but I think his hook nose is rather fine.’

‘ Superb ! ’ said Proserpine. ‘ And who is that radiant and golden-haired youth who is seated at his feet ? ’

‘ ’Tis no less a personage than Hyperion himself,’ replied

Saturn, 'the favourite counsellor of Encecladus. He is a fine orator, and makes up by his round sentences and choicest phrases for the rhetorical deficiencies of his chief, who, to speak the truth, is somewhat curt and husky. They have enough now to do to manage their comrades and keep a semblance of discipline in their routed ranks. Mark that ferocious Briareus there scowling in a corner ! Didst ever see such a moustache ! He glances, methinks, with an evil eye on the mighty Encecladus, and, let me tell you, Briareus has a great following among them ; so they say of him you know, that he hath fifty heads and a hundred arms. See ! how they gather around him '

'Who speaks now to Briareus ?'

'The young and valiant Mimas. Be assured he is counselling war. We shall have a debate now '

'Yon venerable personage, who is seated by the margin of the pool, and weeping with the crocodiles '

'Is old Oceanus '

'He is apparently much affected by his overthrow '

'It is his wont to weep. He used to cry when he fought, and yet he was a powerful warrior.'

'Hark !' said Proserpine

The awful voice of Briareus broke the silence. What a terrible personage was Briareus ! His wild locks hung loose about his shoulders, and blended with his unshorn beard.

'Titans !' shouted the voice which made many a heart tremble, and the breathless Proserpine clasp the arm of Saturn. 'Titans ! Is that spirit dead that once heaped Ossa upon Pelion ? Is it forgotten, even by ourselves, that a younger born revels in our heritage ? Are these forms that surround me, indeed, the shapes at whose dread sight the base Olympians fled to their fitting earth ? Warriors, whose weapons were the rocks, whose firebrands were the burning woods, is the day forgotten when Jove himself turned craven, and skulked in Egypt ? At least my

memory is keen enough to support my courage, and whatever the dread Enceladus may counsel, my voice is still for war ! ’

There ensued, after this harangue of Briareus, a profound and thrilling silence, which was, however, broken in due time by the great leader of the Titans himself.

‘ You mouth it well, Briareus,’ replied Enceladus calmly. ‘ And if great words would re-seat us in Olympus, doubtless, with your potent aid, we might succeed. It never should be forgotten, however, that had we combined at first, in the spirit now recommended, the Olympians would never have triumphed ; and least of all our party should Briareus and his friends forget the reasons of our disunion.’

‘ I take thy sneer, Enceladus,’ said the young and chivalric Mimas, ‘ and throw it in thy teeth. This learn, then, from Briareus and his friends, that if we were lukewarm in the hour of peril, the fault lies not to our account, but with those who had previously so conducted themselves, that, when the danger arrived, it was impossible for us to distinguish between our friends and our foes. Enceladus apparently forgets that had the Olympians never been permitted to enter Heaven, it would have been unnecessary ever to have combined against their machinations.’

‘ Recrimination is useless,’ said a Titan, interposing. ‘ I was one of those who supported Enceladus in the admission of the Olympians above, and I regret it. But at the time, like others, I believed it to be the only mode of silencing the agitation of Jupiter.’

‘ I separated from Enceladus on that question,’ said a huge Titan, lying his length on the ground and leaning one arm on a granite crag, ‘ but I am willing to forget all our differences and support him with all my heart and strength in another effort to restore our glorious constitution.’

‘ Titans,’ said Enceladus, ‘ who is there among you who has found me a laggard in the day of battle ? When the Olympians, as Briareus thinks it necessary to remind you,

fled, I was your leader. Remember, however, then, that there were no thunderbolts. As for myself, I candidly confess to you, that, since the invention of these weapons by Jove, I do not see how war can be carried on by us any longer with effect.'

'By the memory of old Cœlus and these fast-flowing tears,' murmured the venerable Oceanus, patting at the same time a crocodile on the back, 'I call you all to witness that I have no interest to deceive you. Nevertheless, we should not forget that, in this affair of the thunderbolts, it is the universal opinion that there is a very considerable re-action. I have myself, only within these few days, received authentic information that several have fallen of late without any visible ill effects; and I am credibly assured that, during the late storm in Thessaly, a thunderbolt was precipitated into the centre of a vineyard, without affecting the flavour of a single grape.'

Here several of the Titans, who had gathered round Enceladus, shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders, and a long and desultory conversation ensued upon the copious and very controversial subject of Re-action. In the meantime Rhœtus, a young Titan, whispered to one of his companions, that for his part he was convinced that the only way to beat the Olympians was to turn them into ridicule, and that he would accordingly commence at once with the pasquinade on the private life of Jupiter, and some peculiarly delicate criticisms on the characters of the Goddesses.



THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE

PART IV

I

Containing the first View of Elysium

THE toilsome desert was at length passed, and the royal cavaleade ascended the last chasm of mountains that divided Elysium, or the Regions of Bliss, from the Realm of Twilight. As she quitted those dim and dreary plains, the spirit of Proserpine grew lighter, and she indulged in silent but agreeable anticipations of the scene which she was now approaching. On reaching, however, the summit of the mountainous chain, and proceeding a short distance over the rugged table-land into which it now declined, her Majesty was rather alarmed at perceiving that her progress was impeded by a shower of flame that extended, on either side, as far as the eye could reach. Her alarm, however, was of short continuance, for, on the production of his talisman by Tiresias, the shower of flame instantly changed into silvery drops of rose-water and other delicious perfumes. Amid joyous peals of laughter, and some slight playful screams on the part of the ladies, the cavaleade ventured through the ordeal. Now the effect of this magical bath was quite marvellous. A burthen seemed suddenly to have been removed from the spirits of the whole party, their

very existence seemed renewed ; the blood danced about their veins in the liveliest manner imaginable ; and a wild but pleasing titillation ran like lightning through their nerves. Their countenances sparkled with excitement ; and they all talked at the same time. Proserpine was so occupied with her own sensations, that she did not immediately remark the extraordinary change that had occurred in the appearance of the country immediately on passing this magical barrier. She perceived that their course now led over the most elastic and carefully-shaven turf ; groups of beautiful shrubs occasionally appeared, and she discovered with delight that their flowers constantly opened, and sent forth from their bells diminutive birds of radiant plumage. Above them, too, the clouds vanished, and her head was canopied by a sky, unlike, indeed, all things and tints of earth, but which reminded her, in some degree, of the splendour of Olympus.

Proserpine, restless with delight, quitted her litter, and followed by Manto, ran forward to catch the first view of Elysium.

‘ I am quite out of breath,’ said her Majesty, ‘ and really must sit down on this bank of violets. Was ever anything in the world so delightful ! Why, Olympus is nothing to it ! And after Tartarus, too, and that poor unhappy Saturn, and his Titans and his twilight, it really is too much for me. How I do long for the view ! and yet, somehow or other, my heart beats so I cannot walk.’

‘ Will your Majesty re-ascend your litter ? ’ suggested Manto.

‘ Oh, no ! that is worse than anything. They are a mile behind ; they are so slow. Why, Manto ! what is this ? ’

A beautiful white dove hovered in the air over the head of Proserpine and her attendant, and then dropping an olive branch into the lap of the Queen, flapped its wings and whirled away. But what an olive branch ! the stem

was of agate ; each leaf was an emerald , and on the largest, in letters of brilliants, was the inscription .

The Elysians to their beautiful Queen.

‘ Oh, is it not superb ? ’ exclaimed Proserpine. ‘ What charming people, and what excellent subjects ! What loyalty and what taste ! ’

So saying, the enraptured Proserpine rose from the bank of violets, and had scarcely run forwards fifty yards when she suddenly stopped, and started with an exclamation of wonder. The table-land had ceased. She stood upon a precipice of white marble, in many parts clothed with thick bowers of myrtle , before her extended the wide-spreading plains of Elysium. They were bounded upon all sides by gentle elevations entirely covered with flowers, and occasionally shooting forward into the champaign country ; behind these appeared a range of mountains clothed with bright green forests, and still loftier heights behind them, exhibiting, indeed, only bare and sharply-pointed peaks glittering with prismatic light. The undulating plain was studded in all directions with pavilions and pleasure-houses, and groves and gardens glowing with the choicest and most charming fruit , and a broad blue river wound through it, covered with brilliant boats, the waters flashing with phosphoric light as they were cut by the swift and gliding keels. And in the centre of the plain rose a city, a mighty group of all that was beautiful in form and costly in materials, bridges and palaces and triumphal gates of cedar and of marble, columns and minarets of gold, and cupolas and domes of ivory , and ever and anon appeared delicious gardens, raised on the terraces of the houses ; and groups of palm trees with their tall, thin stems, and quivering and languid crests, rose amid the splendid masonry. A sweet soft breeze touched the cheek of the entranced Proserpine, and a single star of silver light glittered in the rosy sky.

‘ ’Tis my favourite hour,’ exclaimed Proserpine. ‘ Thus

have I gazed upon Hesperus in the meads of Enna ! What a scene ! How fortunate that we should have arrived at sunset !’

‘ Ah, Madam !’ observed Manto, ‘ in Elysium the sky is ever thus For the Elysians, the sun seems always to have just set !’

‘ Fortunate people !’ replied Proserpine. ‘ In them, immortality and enjoyment seem indeed blended together. A strange feeling, half of languor, half of voluptuousness, steals over my senses ! It seems that I at length behold the region of my girlish dreams. Such once I fancied Olympus. Ah ! why does not my Pluto live in Elysium ?’

II

Containing some account of the Manners of the Elysians, and of the Palace of Proserpine, and her strange Dream.

The Elysians consisted of a few thousand beatified mortals, the only occupation of whose existence was enjoyment ; the rest of the population comprised some millions of Gnomes and Sylphs, who did nothing but work, and ensured by their labour the felicity of the superior class Every Elysian, male or female, possessed a magnificent palace in the city, and an elegant pavilion on the plain, these, with a due proportion of chariots, horses, and slaves, constituted a proper establishment. The Sylphs and the Gnomes were either scattered about the country, which they cultivated, or lived in the city, where they kept shops, and where they emulated each other in displaying the most ingenious articles of luxury and convenience for the enjoyment and accommodation of the Elysians The townspeople, indeed, rather affected to look down upon the more simple-minded agriculturists, but if these occasionally felt a little mortification in consequence, they might have been consoled, had they been aware that their brethren and sisters who

were in the service of the Elysians avenged their insults, for these latter were the finest Gnomes and Sylphs imaginable, and scarcely deigned to notice any one who was in trade. Whether there were any coin or other circulating medium current in Elysium is a point respecting which I must confess I have not sufficient information to decide ; but if so, it certainly would appear that all money transactions were confined to the Gnomes and the Sylphs, for the Elysians certainly never paid for anything. Perhaps this exemption might have been among their peculiar privileges, and was a substitute for what we call credit, a convenience of which the ancients appear to have had a limited conception. The invention, by Jupiter, of an aristocratic immortality, as a reward for a well-spent life on earth, appears to have been an ingenious idea. It really is a reward, very stimulative of good conduct before we shuffle off the mortal coil, and remarkably contrasts with the democracy of the damned. The Elysians, with a splendid climate, a teeming soil, and a nation made on purpose to wait upon them, of course enjoyed themselves very much. The arts flourished, the theatres paid, and they had a much finer opera than at Ephesus or at Haebernassus. Their cookery was so refined, that one of the least sentimental ceremonies in the world was not only deprived of all its grossness, but was actually converted into an elegant amusement, and so famous that their artists were even required at Olympus. If their dinners were admirable, which is rare, their assemblies were amusing, which is still more uncommon. All the arts of society were carried to perfection in Elysium, a dull thing was never said, and an awkward thing never done. The Elysians, indeed, being highly refined and gifted, for they comprised in their order the very cream of terrestrial society, were naturally a liberal-minded race of nobles, and capable of appreciating every kind of excellence. If a Gnome or a Sylph, therefore, in any way distinguished themselves ; if they sang very well, or acted very well, or

if they were at all emment for any of the other arts of amusement, ay ! indeed if the poor devils could do nothing better than write a poem or a novel, they were sure to be noticed by the Elysians, who always bowed to them as they passed by, and sometimes indeed even admitted them into their circles.

Scarcely had the tram of Proserpine rejoined her on the brink of the precipice, than they heard the flourish of trumpets near at hand, soon followed by a complete harmony of many instruments. A chorus of sweet voices was next distinguished, growing each instant more loud and clear ; and in a few minutes, issuing from a neighbouring grove, came forth a band of heroes and beautiful women, dressed in dazzling raiment, to greet the Queen. A troop of chariots of light and airy workmanship followed, and a crowd of Gnomes and Sylphs singing and playing on various instruments, and dancing with gestures of grace and delicacy. Congratulating the Queen on her arrival in Elysium, and requesting the honour of being permitted to attend her to her palace, they ushered Proserpine and her companions to the chariots, and soon, winding down a gradual declivity, they entered the plain.

If a bird's-eye view of the capital had enchanted Proserpine, the agreeable impression was not diminished, as is generally the case, by her entrance into the city. Never were so much splendour and neatness before combined. Passing through a magnificent arch, Proserpine entered a street of vast and beautiful proportions, lined on each side with palaces of various architecture, painted admirably in fresco, and richly gilt. The road was formed of pounded marbles of various colours, laid down in fanciful patterns, and forming an unrivalled mosaic ; it was bounded on each side by a broad causeway of jasper, of a remarkably bright green, clouded with milk-white streaks. This street led to a sumptuous square, forming alone the palace destined for Proserpine. Its several fronts were supported and adorned

by ten thousand columns, imitating the palm and the lotus ; nor is it possible to conceive anything more light and graceful than the general effect of this stupendous building. Each front was crowned with an immense dome of alabaster, so transparent, that when the palace was illuminated the rosy heaven grew pale, and an effect similar to moonlight was diffused over the canopy of Elysium. And in the centre of the square a Leviathan, carved in white coral, and apparently flouncing in a huge basin of rock crystal, spouted forth from his gills a fountain twelve hundred feet in height ; from one gill ascended a stream of delicious wine, which might be tempered, if necessary, by the cold water that issued from the other.

At the approach of the Queen, the gigantic gates of the palace, framed of carved cedar, flew open with a thrilling burst of music, and Proserpine found herself in a hall wherein several hundred persons, who formed her household, knelt in stillness before her. Wearied with her long journey, and all the excitement of the day, Proserpine signified to one of the Elysians in attendance her desire for refreshment and repose. Immediately the household rose, and gracefully bowing retired in silence, while four ladies of the bed-chamber, very different from the dog-faced damsels of the realm of Twilight, advanced with a gracious smile, and each pressing a white hand to her heart, invited her Majesty to accompany them. Twelve beautiful pages in fanciful costume, and each bearing a torch of cinnamon, preceded them, and Proserpine ascended a staircase of turquoise and silver. As she passed along, she caught glimpses of costly galleries, and suites of gorgeous chambers, but she was almost too fatigued to distinguish anything. A confused vision of long lines of white columns, roofs of carved cedar, or ceilings glowing with forms of exquisite beauty, walls covered with lifelike tapestry, or reflecting in their mighty mirrors her own hurrying figure, and her picturesque attendants, alone remained. She

rejoiced when she at length arrived in a small chamber, in which preparations evidently denoted that it was intended she should rest. It was a pretty little saloon, brilliantly illuminated, and hung with tapestry depicting a party of nymphs and shepherds feasting in an Arcadian scene. In the middle of the chamber a banquet was prepared, and as Proserpine seated herself, and partook of some of the delicacies which a page immediately presented to her, there arose, from invisible musicians, a joyous and festive strain, which accompanied her throughout her repast. When her Majesty had sufficiently refreshed herself, and as the banquet was removing, the music assumed a softer and more subdued, occasionally even a solemn tone; the tapestry, slowly shifting, at length represented the same characters sunk in repose; the attendants all this time gradually extinguishing the lights, and stealing on tiptoe from the chamber. So that, at last, the music, each moment growing fainter, entirely ceased; the figures on the tapestry were scarcely perceptible by the dim lustre of a single remaining lamp; and the slumbering Proserpine fell back upon her couch.

But the Queen of Hell was not destined to undisturbed repose. A dream descended on her brain, and the dream was terrible and strange. She beheld herself a child, playing, as was her wont, in the gardens of Enna, twining garlands of roses, and chasing butterflies. Suddenly, from a bosky thicket of myrtle, slowly issued forth an immense serpent, dark as night, but with eyes of the most brilliant tint, and approached the daughter of Ceres. The innocent child, ignorant of evil, beheld the monster without alarm. Not only did she neither fly nor shriek, but she even welcomed and caressed the frightful stranger, patted its voluminous back, and admired its sparkling vision. The serpent, fascinated instead of fascinating, licked her feet with his arrowy tongue, and glided about for her diversion in a thousand shapes. Emboldened by its gentleness, the

little Proserpine at length even mounted on its back, and rode in triumph among her bowers. Every day the dark serpent issued from the thicket, and every day he found a welcome playmate. Now it came to pass that one day the serpent, growing more bold, induced the young Proserpine to extend her ride beyond the limits of Enna. Night came on, and as it was too late to return, the serpent carried her to a large cave, where it made for her a couch of leaves, and while she slept the affectionate monster kept guard for her protection at the mouth of the cavern. For some reason or other which was not apparent, for in dreams there are always some effects without causes, Proserpine never returned to Enna, but remained and resided with cheerfulness in this cavern. Each morning the serpent went forth alone to seek food for its charge, and regularly returned with a bough in its mouth laden with delicious fruits. One day, during the absence of her guardian, a desire seized Proserpine to quit the cavern, and accordingly she went forth. The fresh air and fragrance of the earth were delightful to her, and she roamed about, unconscious of time, and thoughtless of her return. And as she sauntered along, singing to herself, a beautiful white dove, even the same dove that had welcomed her in the morning on the heights of Elysium, flew before her with its wings glancing in the sunshine. It seemed that the bird wished to attract the attention of the child, so long and so closely did it hover about her, now resting on a branch, as if inviting capture, and then skimming away only to return more swiftly, and occasionally, when for a moment unnoticed, even slightly flapping the rambler with its plume. At length the child was taken with a fancy to catch the bird. But no sooner had she evinced this desire, than the bird, once apparently so anxious to be noticed, seemed resolved to lead her a weary chase; and hours flew away ere Proserpine, panting and exhausted, had captured the beautiful rover and pressed it to her bosom.

It was, indeed, a most beautiful bird, and its possession repaid her for all her exertions. But lo ! as she stood, in a wild sylvan scene caressing it, smoothing its soft plumage, and pressing its head to her cheek, she beheld in the distance approaching her the serpent, and she beheld her old friend with alarm. Apparently her misgiving was not without cause. She observed in an instant that the appearance and demeanour of the serpent were greatly changed. It approached her swift as an arrow, its body rolling in the most agitated contortions, its jaws were distended as if to devour her, its eyes flashed fire, its tongue was a forked flame, and its hiss was like a stormy wind. Proserpine shrieked, and the Queen of Hell awoke from her dream.

III

Containing some account of the wonderful Morality of the Elysians Of Helen and Dido General Society and Coteries Characters of Achilles, Amphion, Patroclus and Memnon

The next morning the Elysian world called to pay their respects to Proserpine. Her Majesty, indeed, held a drawing-room, which was fully and brilliantly attended. Her beauty and her graciousness were universally pronounced enchanting. From this moment the career of Proserpine was a series of magnificent entertainments. The principal Elysians vied with each other in the splendour and variety of the amusements, which they offered to the notice of their Queen. Operas, plays, balls, and banquets followed in dazzling succession. Proserpine, who was almost inexperienced in society, was quite fascinated. She regretted the years she had wasted in her Sicilian solitude ; she marvelled that she ever could have looked forward with delight to a dull annual visit to Olympus ; she almost regretted that, for the sake of an establishment, she could

have been induced to cast her lot in the regal gloom of Tartarus. Elysium exactly suited her. The beauty of the climate and the country, the total absence of care, the constant presence of amusement, the luxury, gaiety, and refined enjoyment perfectly accorded with her amiable disposition, her lively fancy and her joyous temper. She drank deep and eagerly of the cup of pleasure. She entered into all the gay pursuits of her subjects ; she even invented new combinations of diversion. Under her inspiring rule every one confessed that Elysium became every day more Elysian.

The manners of her companions greatly pleased her. She loved those faces always wreathed with smiles, yet never bursting into laughter. She was charmed at the amiable tone in which they addressed each other. Never apparently were people at the same time so agreeable, so obliging, and so polished. For in all they said and did might be detected that peculiar air of high-breeding which pervades the whole conduct of existence with a certain undefinable spirit of calmness, so that your nerves are never shaken by too intense an emotion, which eventually produces a painful reaction. Whatever they did, the Elysians were careful never to be vehement, a grand passion, indeed, was unknown in these happy regions ; love assumed the milder form of flirtation, and as for enmity, you were never abused except behind your back, or it exuded itself in an epigram, or, at the worst, a caricature scribbled upon a fan.

There is one characteristic of the Elysians which, in justice to them, I ought not to have omitted. They were eminently a moral people. If a lady committed herself, she was lost for ever, and packed off immediately to the realm of Twilight. Indeed, they were so particular, that the moment one of the softer sex gave the slightest symptoms of preference to a fortunate admirer, the Elysian world immediately began to look unutterable things, shrug

its moral shoulders, and elevate its charitable eye-brows. But if the preference, by any unlucky chance, assumed the nobler aspect of devotion, and the unhappy fair one gave any indication of really possessing a heart, rest assured she was already half way on the road to perdition. Then commenced one of the most curious processes imaginable, peculiar I apprehend to Elysium, but which I record that the society of less fortunate lands may avail itself of the advantage, and adopt the regulation in its moral police. Immediately that it was clearly ascertained that two persons of different sexes took an irrational interest in each other's society, all the world instantly went about, actuated by a purely charitable sentiment, telling the most extraordinary falsehoods concerning them that they could devise. Thus it was the fashion to call at one house and announce that you had detected the unhappy pair in a private box at the theatre, and immediately to pay your respects at another mansion and declare that you had observed them on the very same day, and at the very same hour, in a boat on the river. At the next visit, the gentleman had been discovered driving her in his cab, and in the course of the morning the scene of indiscretion was the Park, where they had been watched walking by moonlight, muffled up in sables and cashmeres.

This curious process of diffusing information was known in Elysium under the title of '*being talked about*'; and although the stories thus disseminated were universally understood to be fictions, the Elysians ascribed great virtue to the proceeding, maintaining that many an indiscreet fair one had been providentially alarmed by thus becoming the subject of universal conversation, that thus many a reputation had been saved by this charitable slander. There were some malignant philosophers, indeed, doubtless from that silly love of paradox in all ages too prevalent, who pretended that all this Elysian morality was one great delusion, and that this scrupulous anxiety about the

conduct of others arose from a principle, not of *Purity*, but of *Corruption*. The woman who is 'talked about,' these sages would affirm, is generally virtuous, and she is only abused because she devotes to one the charms which all wish to enjoy.

Thus Dido, who is really one of the finest creatures that ever existed, and who with a majestic beauty combines an heroic soul, has made her way with difficulty to the Elysian circle, to which her charms and rank entitle her, while Helen, who, from her very *début*, has been surrounded by fifty lovers, and whose intrigues have ever been notorious, is the very queen of fashion, and all this merely because she has favoured fifty instead of one, and in the midst of all her scrapes has contrived to retain the countenance of her husband.

Apropos of Dido, the Queen of Carthage was the person in all Elysium for whom Proserpine took the greatest liking. Exceedingly beautiful, with the most generous temper and the softest heart in the world, and blessed by nature with a graceful simplicity of manner, which fashion had never sullied, it really was impossible to gaze upon the extraordinary brilliancy of her radiant countenance, to watch the symmetry of her superb figure, and to listen to the artless yet lively observations uttered by a voice musical as a bell, without being fairly bewitched.

When we first enter society, we are everywhere; yet there are few, I imagine, who, after a season, do not subside into a coterie. When the glare of saloons has ceased to dazzle, and we are wearied with the heartless notice of a crowd, we require refinement and sympathy. We find them, and we sink into a clique. And after all, can the river of life flow on more agreeably than in a sweet course of pleasure with those we love? To wander in the green shade of secret woods and whisper our affection, to float on the sunny waters of some gentle stream, and listen to a

serenade, to canter with a light-hearted cavalcade over breezy downs, or cool our panting chargers in the summer stillness of winding and woody lanes, to banquet with the beautiful and the witty; to send care to the devil, and indulge the whim of the moment, the priest, the warrior, and the statesman may frown and struggle as they like; but this is existence, and this, this is Elysium!

So Proserpine deemed when, wearied with the monotony of the great world, she sought refuge in the society of Dido and Atalanta, Achilles, Amphion, and Patroclus or Memnon. When Æneas found that Dido had become fashionable, he made overtures for a reconciliation, but Dido treated him with calm contempt. The pious Æneas, indeed, was the aversion of Proserpine. He was the head of the Elysian saints, was president of a society to induce the Gnomes only to drink water, and was so horrified at the general conduct of the Elysians, that he questioned the decrees of Minos and Rhadamanthus, who had permitted them to enter the happy region so easily. The pious Æneas was of opinion that everybody ought to have been damned except himself. Proserpine gave him no encouragement. Achilles was the finest gentleman in Elysium. No one dressed or rode like him. He was very handsome, very witty, very unaffected, and had an excellent heart. Achilles was the leader of the Elysian youth, who were indeed devoted to him. Proserpine took care, therefore, that he should dangle in her train. Amphion had a charming voice for a supper after the opera. He was a handsome little fellow, but not to be depended upon. He broke a heart, or a dinner engagement, with the same reckless sentimentality, for he was one of those who always weep when they betray you, and whom you are sure never to see again immediately that they have vowed eternal friendship. Patroclus was a copy of Achilles without his talents and vivacity, but elegant and quiet. Of all these, Memnon

was perhaps the favourite of Proserpine; nor must he be forgotten, amiable, gay, brilliant, the child of whim and impulse, in love with every woman he met for four-and-twenty hours, and always marvelling at his own delusion !



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THE RISE OF ISKANDER

THE RISE OF ISKANDER

Chapter I

THE sun had set behind the mountains, and the rich plain of Athens was suffused with the violet glow of a Grecian eve. A light breeze rose ; the olive-groves awoke from their noonday trance, and rustled with returning animation, and the pennons of the Turkish squadron, that lay at anchor in the harbour of Piræus, twinkled in the lively air. From one gate of the city the women came forth in procession to the fountain ; from another, a band of sumptuous horsemen sallied out, and threw their wanton javelins in the invigorating sky, as they galloped over the plain. The voice of birds, the buzz of beauteous insects, the breath of fragrant flowers, the quivering note of the nightingale, the pittering call of the grasshopper, and the perfume of the violet, shrinking from the embrace of the twilight breeze, filled the purple air with music and with odour.

A solitary being stood upon the towering crag of the Acropolis, amid the ruins of the Temple of Minerva, and gazed upon the inspiring scene. Around him rose the matchless memorials of antique art, immortal columns whose symmetry baffles modern proportion, serene Caryatides, bearing with greater grace a graceful burthen, carvings of delicate precision, and friezes breathing with

heroic life. Apparently the stranger, though habited as a Moslem, was not insensible to the genius of the locality, nor indeed would his form and countenance have misbecome a contemporary of Pericles and Phidias. In the prime of life, and far above the common stature, but with a frame the muscular power of which was even exceeded by its almost ideal symmetry, his high white forehead, his straight profile, his oval countenance, and his curling lip, exhibited the same visage that had inspired the sculptor of the surrounding demigods

The dress of the stranger, although gorgeous, was, however, certainly not classic. A crimson shawl was wound round his head, and glittered with a trembling aigrette of diamonds. His vest, which set tight to his form, was of green velvet, richly embroidered with gold and pearls. Over this he wore a light jacket of crimson velvet, equally embroidered, and lined with sable. He wore also the full white tunic common among the Albanians, and while his feet were protected by sandals, the lower part of his legs was guarded by greaves of embroidered green velvet. From a broad belt of scarlet leather peeped forth the jewelled hilts of a variety of daggers, and by his side was an enormous scimitar, in a scabbard of chased silver.

The stranger gazed upon the wide prospect before him with an air of pensive abstraction. ‘Beautiful Greece,’ he exclaimed, ‘thou art still my country. A mournful lot is mine, a strange and mournful lot, yet not uncheered by hope. I am at least a warrior, and this arm, though trained to war against thee, will not well forget, in the quick hour of battle, the blood that flows within it. Themistocles saved Greece and died a Satrap. I am bred one, let me reverse our lots, and die at least a patriot.’

At this moment the Evening Hymn to the Virgin arose from a neighbouring convent. The stranger started as the sacred melody floated towards him, and taking a small golden cross from his heart, he kissed it with devotion,

and then descending the steep of the citadel, entered the city.

He proceeded along the narrow winding streets of Athens until he at length arrived in front of a marble palace, in the construction of which the architect had certainly not consulted the surrounding models which Time had spared to him, but which, however it might have offended a classic taste, presented altogether a magnificent appearance. Half-a-dozen guards, whose shields and helmets somewhat oddly contrasted with the two pieces of cannon, one of which was ostentatiously placed on each side of the portal, and which had been presented to the Prince of Athens by the Republic of Venice. lounged before the entrance, and paid their military homage to the stranger as he passed them. He passed them and entered a large quadrangular garden, surrounded by arcades, supported by a considerable number of thin, low pillars, of barbarous workmanship, and various-coloured marbles. In the midst of the garden rose a fountain, whence the bubbling waters flowed in artificial channels through vistas of orange and lemon trees. By the side of the fountain on a luxurious couch, his eyes fixed upon a richly-illuminated volume, reposed Nicæus, the youthful Prince of Athens.

‘Ah! is it you?’ said the Prince, looking up with a smile, as the stranger advanced. ‘You have arrived just in time to remind me that we must do something more than read the Persæ, we must act it’

‘My dear Nicæus,’ replied the stranger, ‘I have arrived only to bid you farewell.’

‘Farewell!’ exclaimed the Prince in a tone of surprise and sorrow, and he rose from the couch. ‘Why! what is this?’

‘It is too true,’ said the stranger, and he led the way down one of the walks. ‘Events have occurred which entirely baffle all our plans and prospects, and place me in a position as difficult as it is harrowing. Hunniades has

suddenly crossed the Danube in great force, and carried everything before him. I am ordered to proceed to Albania instantly, and to repair to the camp at the head of the Epirots.'

'Indeed!' said Nicæus, with a thoughtful air. 'My letters did not prepare me for this. 'Tis sudden! Is Amurath himself in the field?'

'No; Karam Bey commands. I have accounted for my delay to the Sultan by pretended difficulties in our treaty, and have held out the prospect of a larger tribute.'

'When we are plotting that that tribute should be paid no longer!' added Nicæus, with a smile

'Alas! my dear friend,' replied the Turkish commander, 'my situation has now become critical. Hitherto my services for the Moslemín have been confined to acting against nations of their own faith. I am now suddenly summoned to combat against my secret creed, and the best allies of what I must yet call my secret country. The movement, it appears to me, must be made now or never, and I cannot conceal from myself, that it never could have been prosecuted under less auspicious circumstances.'

'What, you desponding!' exclaimed Nicæus, 'then I must despair. Your sanguine temper has alone supported me throughout all our dangerous hopes.'

'And Æschylus?' said the stranger, smiling.

'And Æschylus, certainly,' replied Nicæus, 'but I have lived to find even Æschylus insipid. I pant for action.'

'It may be nearer than we can foresee,' replied the stranger. 'There is a God who fashions all things. He will not desert a righteous cause. He knoweth that my thoughts are as pure as my situation is difficult. I have some dim ideas still brooding in my mind, but we will not discuss them now. I must away, dear Prince. The breeze serves fairly. Have you ever seen Hunniades?'

'I was educated at the Court of Transylvania,' replied

Nicæus, looking down with a somewhat embarrassed air. 'He is a famous knight, Christendom's chief bulwark.'

The Turkish commander sighed. 'When we meet again,' he said, 'may we meet with brighter hopes and more buoyant spirits. At present, I must, indeed, say farewell.'

The Prince turned with a dejected countenance, and pressed his companion to his heart. 'Tis a sad end,' said he, 'to all our happy hours and lofty plans.'

'You are as yet too young to quarrel with Fortune,' replied the stranger, 'and for myself, I have not yet settled my accounts with her. However, for the present, farewell, dear Nicæus!'

'Farewell,' replied the Prince of Athens, 'farewell, dear Iskander!'

Chapter II

Iskander was the youngest son of the Prince of Epirus, who, with the other Grecian princes, had, at the commencement of the reign of Amurath the Second, in vain resisted the progress of the Turkish arms in Europe. The Prince of Epirus had obtained peace by yielding his four sons as hostages to the Turkish sovereign, who engaged that they should be educated in all the accomplishments of their rank, and with a due deference to their faith. On the death of the Prince of Epirus, however, Amurath could not resist the opportunity that then offered itself of adding to his empire the rich principality he had long coveted. A Turkish force instantly marched into Epirus, and seized upon Croia, the capital city, and the children of its late ruler were doomed to death. The beauty, talents, and valour of the youngest son, saved him, however, from the fate of his poisoned brothers. Iskander was educated at Adrianople in the Moslem faith, and as he, at a very early age, excelled in feats of arms all the Moslem warriors, he became a prime favourite of the Sultan, and speedily rose in his service to the highest rank.

At this period the irresistible progress of the Turkish arms was the subject of alarm throughout all Christendom

Constantinople, then the capital of the Greek Empire, had already been more than once besieged by the predecessors of Amurath, and had only been preserved by fortunate accidents and humiliating terms. The despots of Bosnia, Servia, and Bulgaria, and the Grecian princes of Etolia, Macedon, Epirus, Athens, Phœcis, Bœotia, and indeed of all the regions to the straits of Corinth, were tributaries to Amurath, and the rest of Europe was only preserved from his grasp by the valour of the Hungarians and the Poles, whom a fortunate alliance had now united under the sovereignty of Uladislau, who, incited by the pious eloquence of the cardinal of St. Angelo, the legate of the Pope, and, yielding to the tears and supplications of the despot of Servia, had, at the time our story opens, quitted Buda, at the head of a large army, crossed the Danube, and, joining his valiant viceroy, the famous John Hunniades, varvode of Transylvania, defeated the Turks with great slaughter, relieved Bulgaria, and pushed on to the base of Mount Hæmus, known in modern times as the celebrated Balkan. Here the Turkish general, Karam Bey, awaited the Christians, and hither to his assistance was Iskander commanded to repair at the head of a body of janissaries, who had accompanied him to Greece, and the tributary Epirots.

Had Iskander been influenced by vulgar ambition, his loftiest desires might have been fully gratified by the career which Amurath projected for him. The Turkish Sultan destined for the Grecian Prince the hand of one of his daughters, and the principal command of his armies. He lavished upon him the highest dignities and boundless wealth, and, whether it arose from a feeling of remorse, or of affection for a warrior whose unexampled valour and unrivalled skill had already added some of the finest provinces of Asia to his rule, it is certain that Iskander might have

exercised over Amaruth a far greater degree of influence than was enjoyed by any other of his courtiers. But the heart of Iskander responded with no sympathy to these flattering favours. His Turkish education could never eradicate from his memory the consciousness that he was a Greek, and although he was brought up in the Moslem faith, he had, at an early period of his career, secretly recurred to the creed of his Christian fathers. He beheld in Amaruth the murderer of his dearest kinsmen, and the oppressor of his country; and although a certain calmness of temper, and coolness of judgment, which early developed themselves in his character, prevented him from ever giving any indication of his secret feelings, Iskander had long meditated on the exalted duty of freeing his country.

Dispatched to Greece, to arrange the tributes and the treaties of the Grecian princes, Iskander became acquainted with the young Nicæus; and their acquaintance soon matured into friendship. Nicæus was inexperienced; but nature had not intended him for action. The young Prince of Athens would loiter by the side of a fountain, and dream of the wonders of old days. Surrounded by his eunuchs, his priests, and his courtiers, he envied Leonidas, and would have emulated Themistocles. He was passionately devoted to the ancient literature of his country, and had the good taste, rare at that time, to prefer Demosthenes and Lysias to Chrysostom and Gregory, and the choruses of the Grecian theatre to the hymns of the Greek church. The sustained energy and noble simplicity of the character of Iskander, seemed to recall to the young prince the classic heroes over whom he was so often musing, while the enthusiasm and fancy of Nicæus, and all that apparent weakness of will, and those quick vicissitudes of emotion, to which men of a fine susceptibility are subject, equally engaged the sympathy of the more vigorous and constant and experienced mind of his companion.

To Nicæus, Iskander had, for the first time in his life, confided much of his secret heart, and the young Prince fired at the inspiring tale. Often they consulted over the fortunes of their country, and, excited by their mutual invention, at length even dared to hope that they might effect its deliverance, when Iskander was summoned to the army. It was a mournful parting. Both of them felt that the last few months of their lives had owed many charms to their companionship. The parting of friends, united by sympathetic tastes, is always painful, and friends, unless this sympathy subsist, had much better never meet. Iskander stepped into the ship, sorrowful, but serene; Nicæus returned to his palace moody and fretful; lost his temper with his courtiers, and, when he was alone, even shed tears.

Chapter III

Three weeks had elapsed since the parting of Iskander and Nicæus, when the former, at the head of ten thousand men, entered by a circuitous route the defiles of Mount Hæmus, and approached the Turkish camp, which had been pitched upon a vast and elevated table-ground, commanded on all sides by superior heights, which, however, were fortified and well-garrisoned by janissaries. The Epirots halted, and immediately prepared to raise their tents, while their commander, attended by a few of his officers, instantly proceeded to the pavilion of Karam Bey.

The arrival of Iskander diffused great joy among the soldiery, and as he passed through the encampment, the exclamations of the Turkish warriors announced how ready they were to be led to the charge by a chieftain who had been ever successful. A guard of honour, by the orders of Karam Bey, advanced to conduct Iskander to his presence, and soon, entering the pavilion, the Grecian prince

exchanged courtesies with the Turkish general. After the formal compliments had passed, Karam Bey waved his hand, and the pavilion was cleared, with the exception of Mousa, the chief secretary, and favourite of Karam.

‘ You have arrived in good time, Iskander, to assist in the destruction of the Christian dogs,’ said the Bey. ‘ Flushed with their accursed success, they have advanced too far. Twice they have endeavoured to penetrate the mountains, and each time they have been forced to retire, with great loss. The passages are well barricaded with timber and huge fragments of rock. The dogs have lost all heart, and are sinking under the joint sufferings of hunger and cold. Our scouts tell me they exhibit symptoms of retreat. We must rush down from the mountains, and annihilate them.’

‘ Is Hunniades here in person ? ’ inquired Iskander.

‘ He is here,’ replied Karam, ‘ in person ; the dog of dogs ! Come, Iskander, his head would be a fine Ramadan present to Amurath. ’Tis a head worth three tails, I guess.’

Mousa, the chief secretary, indulged in some suppressed laughter at this joke. Iskander smiled.

‘ If they retreat we must assuredly attack them,’ observed Iskander, musingly. ‘ I have a persuasion that Hunniades and myself will soon meet ’

‘ If there be truth in the Prophet ! ’ exclaimed Karam. ‘ I have no doubt of it. Hunniades is reserved for you, Bey. We shall hold up our heads at court yet, Iskander. You have had letters lately ? ’

‘ Some slight words ’

‘ No mention of us, of course ? ’

‘ Nothing, except some passing praise of your valour and discretion ’

‘ We do our best, we do our best. Will Isa Bey have *Ætoha*, thank you ? ’

‘ I have no thoughts. Our royal father will not forget his children, and Isa Bey is a most valiant chieftain.’

‘ You heard not that he was coming here ? ’ inquired Karam.

‘ Have you ? ’ responded the cautious Iskander

‘ A rumour, a rumour,’ replied Karam ‘ He is at Adrianople, thank you ? ’

‘ It may be so : I am, you know, from Athens.’

‘ True, true We shall beat them, Iskander, we shall beat them.’

‘ For myself, I feel sanguine,’ replied the Prince, and he arose to retire. ‘ I must at present to my men. We must ascertain more accurately the movement of the Christians before we decide on our own. I am inclined myself to reconnoitre them. How far may it be ? ’

‘ There is not room to form our array between them and the mountains,’ replied Karam.

‘ ’Tis well. Success attend the true believers ! By to-morrow’s dawn we shall know more.’

Chapter IV

Iskander returned to his men. Night was coming on. Fires and lights blazed and sparkled in every direction. The air was clear, but very cold. He entered his tent, and muffling himself up in his pelisse of sables, he mounted his horse, and declining any attendance, rode for some little distance, until he had escaped from the precincts of the camp. Then he turned his horse towards one of the wildest passes of the mountain, and galloping at great speed, never stopped until he had gained a considerable ascent. The track became steep and rugged. The masses of loose stone rendered his progress slow, but his Anatolian charger still bore him at intervals bravely, and in three hours’ time he had gained the summit of Mount Hæmus. A brilliant moon flooded the broad plains of Bulgaria with shadowy light. At the base of the mountainous range,

the red watch-fires denoted the situation of the Christian camp.

Iskander proceeded down the descent with an audacious rapidity, but his charger was thorough-bred, and his moments were golden. Ere midnight, he had reached the outposts of the enemy, and was challenged by a sentinel.

‘ Who goes there ? ’

‘ A friend to Christendom.’

‘ The word ? ’

‘ I have it not, nay, calmly. I am alone, but I am not unarmed. I do not know the word. I come from a far country, and bear important tidings to the great Hunniades; conduct me to that chief.’

‘ May I be crucified if I will,’ responded the sentinel, ‘ before I know who and what you are. Come, keep off, unless you wish to try the effect of a Polish lance,’ continued the sentinel, ‘ ’tis something, I assure you, not less awkward than your Greek fire, if Greek indeed you be.’

‘ My friend, you are a fool,’ said Iskander, ‘ but time is too precious to argue any longer.’ So saying, the Turkish commander dismounted, and taking up the brawny sentinel in his arms with the greatest ease, threw him over his shoulder, and threatening the astounded soldier with instant death if he struggled, covered him with his pelisse, and entered the camp.

They approached a watch-fire, around which several soldiers were warming themselves.

‘ Who goes there ? ’ inquired a second sentinel.

‘ A friend to Christendom,’ answered Iskander.

‘ The word ? ’

Iskander hesitated.

‘ The word, or I ’ll let fly,’ said the sentinel, elevating his cross-bow.

‘ The Bridge of Buda,’ instantly replied the terrified prisoner beneath the pelisse of Iskander.

‘ Why did you not answer before, then ? ’ said one of the guards.

‘ And why do you mock us by changing your voice ? ’ said another, ‘ Come, get on with you, and no more jokes ’

Iskander proceeded through a street of tents, in some of which were lights, but all of which were silent. At length, he met the esquire of a Polish knight returning from a convivial meeting, not a little elevated.

‘ Who are you ? ’ inquired Iskander.

‘ I am an esquire,’ replied the gentleman.

‘ A shrewd man, I doubt not, who would make his fortune,’ replied Iskander. ‘ You must know great things have happened. Being on guard I have taken a prisoner, who has deep secrets to divulge to the Lord Hunniades Thither, to his pavilion, I am now bearing him. But he is a stout barbarian, and almost too much for me. Assist me in carrying him to the pavilion of Hunniades, and you shall have all the reward, and half the fame ’

‘ You are a very civil spoken young gentleman,’ said the esquire. ‘ I think I know your voice. Your name, if I mistake not, is Leckinski ? ’

‘ A relative. We had a common ancestor ’

‘ I thought so. I know the Leckinskies ever by their voice. I am free to help you on the terms you mention, all the reward and half the fame. ’Tis a strong barbarian, is it ? We cannot cut his throat, or it will not divulge. All the reward and half the fame ! I will be a knight to-morrow. It seems a sort of fish, and has a smell ’

The esquire seized the shoulders of the prisoner, who would have spoken had he not been terrified by the threats of Iskander, who, carrying the legs of the sentinel, allowed the Polish gentleman to lead the way to the pavilion of Hunniades. Thither they soon arrived ; and Iskander, dropping his burthen, and leaving the prisoner without to the charge of his assistant, entered the pavilion of the General of the Hungarians.

He was stopped in a small outer apartment by an officer, who inquired his purpose, and to whom he repeated his desire to see the Hungarian leader, without loss of time, on important business. The officer hesitated ; but, summoning several guards, left Iskander in their custody, and, stepping behind a curtain, disappeared. Iskander heard voices, but could distinguish no words. Soon the officer returned, and, ordering the guards to disarm and search Iskander, directed the Grecian Prince to follow him. Drawing aside the curtain, Iskander and his attendant entered a low apartment of considerable size. It was hung with skins. A variety of armour and dresses were piled on couches. A middle-aged man, of majestic appearance, muffled in a pelisse of furs, with long chestnut hair, and a cap of crimson velvet and ermine, was walking up and down the apartment, and dictating some instructions to a person who was kneeling on the ground, and writing by the bright flame of a brazen lamp. The bright flame of the blazing lamp fell full upon the face of the secretary. Iskander beheld a most beautiful woman.

She looked up as Iskander entered. Her large dark eyes glanced through his soul. Her raven hair descended to her shoulders in many curls on each side of her face, and was braided with strings of immense pearls. A broad cap of white fox-skin crowned her whiter forehead. Her features were very small, but sharply moulded, and a delicate tint gave animation to her clear fair cheek. She looked up as Iskander entered, with an air rather of curiosity than embarrassment.

Hunniades stopped, and examined his visitor with a searching inquisition. ‘ Whence come you ? ’ inquired the Hungarian chieftain.

‘ From the Turkish camp,’ was the answer.

‘ An envoy or a deserter ? ’

‘ Neither.’

‘ What then ? ’

‘ A convert ’

‘ Your name ? ’

‘ Lord Hunniades,’ said Iskander, ‘ that is for your private ear. I am unnamed, and were I otherwise, the first knight of Christendom can scarcely fear. I am one in birth and rank your equal, if not in fame, at least, I trust, in honour. My time is all precious. I can scarcely stay here while my horse breathes. Dismiss your attendant ’

Hunniades darted a glance at his visitor which would have baffled a weaker brain, but Iskander stood the scrutiny calm and undisturbed. ‘ Go, Stanislaus,’ said the Varvode to the officer. ‘ This lady, sir,’ continued the chieftain, ‘ is my daughter, and one from whom I have no secrets ’

Iskander bowed lowly as the officer disappeared

‘ And now,’ said Hunniades, ‘ to business. Your purpose ? ’

‘ I am a Grecian Prince, and a compulsory ally of the Moslem. In a word, my purpose here is to arrange a plan by which we may effect, at the same time, your triumph, and my freedom ’

‘ To whom, then, have I the honour of speaking ? ’ inquired Hunniades

‘ My name, great Hunniades, is perhaps not altogether unknown to you. They call me Iskander ’

‘ What, the right arm of Amurath, the conqueror of Caramania, the flower of Turkish chivalry ? Do I indeed behold that matchless warrior ? ’ exclaimed Hunniades, and he held forth his hand to his guest, and ungirding his own sword, offered it to the Prince. ‘ Iduna,’ continued Hunniades, to his daughter, ‘ you at length behold Iskander ’

‘ My joy is great, sir,’ replied Iduna, ‘ if I indeed rightly understand that we may count the Prince Iskander a champion of the Cross.’

Iskander took from his heart his golden crucifix, and kissed it before her. ‘ This has been my companion and

consolation for long years, lady,' said Iskander ; ' you, perhaps, know my mournful history, Hunniades. Hitherto my pretended sovereign has not required me to bare my scimitar against my Christian brethren. That hour, however, has at length arrived, and it has decided me to adopt a line of conduct long meditated. Karam Bey, who is aware of your necessities, the moment you commence your retreat, will attack you. I shall command his left wing. In spite of his superior power and position, draw up in array, and meet him with confidence. I propose, at a convenient moment in the day, to withdraw my troops, and with the Epirots hasten to my native country, and at once raise the standard of independence. It is a bold measure, but Success is the child of Audacity. We must assist each other with mutual diversions. Single-handed it is in vain for me to commence a struggle, which, with all adventitious advantages, will require the utmost exertion of energy, skill, and patience. But if yourself and the King Uladislau occupy the armies of Amurath in Bulgaria, I am not without hope of ultimate success, since I have to inspire me all the most urgent interests of humanity, and combat, at the same time, for my God, my country, and my lawful crown '

' Brave Prince, I pledge you my troth,' said Hunniades, coming forward and seizing his hand ; ' and while Iskander and Hunniades live, they will never cease until they have achieved their great and holy end.'

' It is a solemn compact,' said Iskander, ' more sacred than if registered by all the scribes of Christendom. Lady Iduna, your prayers ! '

' They are ever with the champions of the Cross,' replied the daughter of Hunniades. She rose, the large cloak in which she was enveloped fell from her exquisite form. ' Noble Iskander, this rosary is from the Holy Sepulchre,' continued Iduna ; ' wear it for the sake and memory of that blessed Saviour who died for our sins '

Iskander held forth his arm and touched her delicate hand as he received the rosary, which, pressing to his lips, he placed round his neck.

‘Great Hunniades,’ said the Grecian Prince, ‘I must cross the mountains before dawn Let me venture to entreat that we should hear to-morrow that the Christian camp is in retreat’

‘Let it even be so,’ said the Hungarian, after some thought, ‘and may to-morrow’s sun bring brighter days to Christendom’ And with these words terminated the brief and extraordinary visit of Iskander to the Christian general.

Chapter V

The intelligence of the breaking up of the Christian camp, and the retreat of the Christian army, soon reached the Divan of Karam Bey, who immediately summoned Iskander to consult on the necessary operations. The chieftains agreed that instant pursuit was indispensable, and soon the savage Hæmus poured forth from its green bosom swarms of that light cavalry which was perhaps even a more fatal arm of the Turkish power than the famous Janissaries themselves They hovered on the rear of the retreating Christians, charged the wavering, captured the unwary. It was impossible to resist their sudden and impetuous movements, which rendered their escape as secure as their onset was overwhelming. Wearied at length by the repeated assaults, Hunniades, who, attended by some chosen knights, had himself repaired to the rear, gave orders for the army to halt and offer battle.

Their pursuers instantly withdrew to a distance, and gradually forming into two divisions, awaited the arrival of the advancing army of the Turks The Moslem came forward in fierce array, and with the sanguine courage inspired by expected triumph Very conspicuous was

Iskander bounding in his crimson vest upon his ebon steed, and waving his gleaming scimitar

The Janissaries charged, calling upon Allah ! with an awful shout. The Christian knights, invoking the Christian saints, received the Turks at the points of their lances. But many a noble lance was shivered that morn, and many a bold rider and worthy steed bit the dust of that field, borne down by the irresistible numbers of their fierce adversaries. Everywhere the balls and the arrows whistled through the air, and sometimes an isolated shriek heard amid the general clang, announced another victim to the fell and mysterious agency of the Greek fire

Hunniades, while he performed all the feats of an approved warrior, watched with anxiety the disposition of the Turkish troops. Hitherto, from the nature of their position but a portion of both armies had interfered in the contest, and as yet Iskander had kept aloof. But now, as the battle each instant raged with more fury, and as it was evident that ere long the main force of both armies must be brought into collision, Hunniades, with a terrible suspense, watched whether the Grecian prince were willing or even capable of executing his plan. Without this fulfilment, the Christian hero could not conceal from himself that the day must be decided against the Cross.

In the meantime Iskander marked the course of events with not less eagerness than Hunniades. Already Karam Bey had more than once summoned him to bring the Epirots into action. He assented ; but an hour passed away without changing his position. At length, more from astonishment than rage, the Turkish commander sent his chief secretary Mousa himself to impress his wishes upon his colleague, and obtain some explanation of his views and conduct. Mousa found Iskander surrounded by some of the principal Epirot nobles, all mounted on horseback, and standing calmly under a wide-spreading plane tree. The chief secretary of Karam Bey was too skilful a courtier to permit his

countenance to express his feelings, and he delivered himself of his mission rather as if he had come to request advice, than to communicate a reprimand.

‘Your master is a wise man Mousa,’ replied Iskander; ‘but even Karam Bey may be mistaken. He deems that a battle is not to be won by loitering under a shadowy tree. Now I differ with him, and I even mean to win this day by such a piece of truancy. However, it may certainly now be time for more active work. You smile encouragement, good Mousa. Giorgio, Demetrius, to your duty!’

At these words, two stout Epirots advanced to the unfortunate secretary, seized and bound him, and placed him on horseback before one of their comrades.

‘Now all who love their country, follow me!’ exclaimed Iskander. So saying, and at the head of five thousand horsemen, Iskander quitted the field at a rapid pace.

Chapter VI

With incredible celerity Iskander and his cavalry dashed over the plains of Roumelia, and never halted, except for short and hurried intervals of rest and repose, until they had entered the mountainous borders of Epirus, and were within fifty miles of its capital, Croia. On the eve of entering the kingdom of his fathers, Iskander ordered his guards to produce the chief secretary of Karam Bey. Exhausted with fatigue, vexation, and terror, the disconsolate Mousa was led forward.

‘Cheer up, worthy Mousa!’ said Iskander, lying his length on the green turf. ‘We have had a sharp ride; but I doubt not we shall soon find ourselves, by the blessing of God, in good quarters. There is a city at hand which they call Croia, and in which once, as the rumour runs, the son of my father should not have had to go seek for an entrance. No matter. Methinks, worthy Mousa, thou

art the only man in our society that can sign thy name. Come now, write me an order, signed Karam Bey, to the governor of this said city, for its delivery up to the valiant champion of the Crescent, Iskander, and thou shalt ride in future at a pace more suitable to a secretary'

The worthy Mousa humbled himself to the ground, and then taking his writing materials from his girdle, inscribed the desired order, and delivered it to Iskander, who, glancing at the inscription, pushed it into his vest.

'I shall proceed at once to Croia, with a few friends,' said Iskander; 'do you, my bold companions, follow me this eve in various parties, and in various routes. At dead of the second night, collect in silence before the gates of Croia!'

Thus speaking, Iskander called for his now refreshed charger, and accompanied by two hundred horsemen, bade farewell for a brief period to his troops, and soon having crossed the mountains, descended into the fertile plains of Epirus

When the sun rose in the morning, Iskander and his friends beheld at the further end of the plain a fine city shining in the light. It was surrounded with lofty turreted walls flanked by square towers, and was built upon a gentle eminence, which gave it a majestic appearance. Behind it rose a lofty range of purple mountains of picturesque form, and the highest peaks capped with snow. A noble lake, from which troops of wild fowl occasionally rose, expanded like a sheet of silver on one side of the city. The green breast of the contiguous hills sparkled with white houses

'Behold Croia!' exclaimed Iskander 'Our old fathers could choose a site, comrades. We shall see whether they expended their time and treasure for strangers, or their own seed' So saying he spurred his horse, and with panting hearts and smiling faces, Iskander and his company had soon arrived in the vicinity of the city.

The city was surrounded by a beautiful region of corn-fields and fruit-trees. The road was arched with the over-

hanging boughs The birds chirped on every spray. It was a blithe and merry morn. Iskander plucked a bunch of olives as he cantcred along. ‘ Dear friends,’ he said, looking round with an inspiring smile, ‘ let us gather our first harvest ! ’ And, thereupon, each putting forth his rapid hand, seized, as he rushed by, the emblem of possession, and following the example of his leader, placed it in his cap

They arrived at the gates of the city, which was strongly garrisoned , and Iskander, followed by his train, galloped up the height of the citadel. Alighting from his horse, he was ushered into the divan of the governor, an ancient Pacha, who received the conqueror of Caramania with all the respect that became so illustrious a champion of the Crescent. After the usual forms of ceremonious hospitality, Iskander, with a courteous air, presented him the order for delivering up the citadel ; and the old Pacha, resigning himself to the loss of his post with Oriental submission, instantly delivered the keys of the citadel and town to Iskander, and requested permission immediately to quit the scene of his late command.

Quitting the citadel, Iskander now proceeded through the whole town, and in the afternoon reviewed the Turkish garrison in the great square As the late governor was anxious to quit Croia that very day, Iskander insisted on a considerable portion of the garrison accompanying him as a guard of honour, and returning the next morning The rest he divided in several quarters, and placed the gates in charge of his own companions.

At midnight the Epirots, faithful to their orders, arrived and united beneath the walls of the city, and after interchanging the signals agreed upon, the gates were opened A large body instantly marched and secured the citadel. The rest, conducted by appointed leaders, surrounded the Turks in their quarters And suddenly, in the noon of night, in that great city, arose a clang so dreadful that people leapt up from their sleep and stared with stupor.

Instantly the terrace of every house blazed with torches, and it became as light as day. Troops of armed men were charging down the streets, brandishing their scimitars and yataghans, and exclaiming, 'The Cross, the Cross!' 'Liberty!' 'Greece!' 'Iskander and Epirus!' The townsmen recognised their countrymen by their language and their dress. The name of Iskander acted as a spell. They stopt not to inquire. A magic sympathy at once persuaded them that this great man had, by the grace of Heaven, recurred to the creed and country of his fathers. And so every townsman, seizing the nearest weapon, with a spirit of patriotic frenzy, rushed into the streets, crying out, 'The Cross, the Cross!' 'Liberty!' 'Greece!' 'Iskander and Epirus!' Ay! even the women lost all womanly fears, and stimulated instead of soothing the impulse of their masters. They fetched them arms, they held the torches, they sent them forth with vows and prayers and imprecations, their children clinging to their robes, and repeating with enthusiasm, phrases which they could not comprehend.

The Turks fought with the desperation of men who feel that they are betrayed, and must be victims. The small and isolated bodies were soon massacred, all with cold steel, for at this time, although some of the terrible inventions of modern warfare were introduced, their use was not general. The citadel, indeed, was fortified with cannon; but the greater part of the soldiery trusted to their crooked swords and their unerring javelins. The main force of the Turkish garrison had been quartered in an old palace of the archbishop, situate in the middle of the city on a slightly rising and open ground, a massy building of rustic stone. Here the Turks, although surrounded, defended themselves desperately, using their cross-bows with terrible effect, and hither, the rest of the city being now secured, Iskander himself repaired to achieve its complete deliverance.

The Greeks had endeavoured to carry the principal

entrance of the palace by main force, but the strength of the portal had resisted their utmost exertions, and the arrows of the besieged had at length forced them to retire to a distance. Iskander directed that two pieces of cannon should be dragged down from the citadel, and then played against the entrance. In the meantime, he ordered immense piles of damp faggots to be lit before the building, the smoke of which prevented the besieged from taking any aim. The ardour of the people was so great that the cannon were soon served against the palace, and their effects were speedily remarked. The massy portal shook; a few blows of the battering ram, and it fell. The Turks sallied forth, were received with a shower of Greek fire, and driven in with agonising yells. Some endeavoured to escape from the windows, and were speared or cut down, some appeared wringing their hands in despair upon the terraced roof. Suddenly the palace was announced to be on fire. A tall white blueish flame darted up from a cloud of smoke, and soon, as if by magic, the whole back of the building was encompassed with rising tongues of red and raging light. Amid a Babel of shrieks, and shouts, and cheers, and prayers, and curses, the roof of the palace fell in with a crash, which produced amid the besiegers an awful and momentary silence, but in an instant they started from their strange inactivity, and rushing forward, leapt into the smoking ruins, and at the same time completed the massacre and achieved their freedom.

Chapter VII

At break of dawn Iskander sent couriers throughout all Epirus, announcing the fall of Croia, and that he had raised the standard of independence in his ancient country. He also despatched a trusty messenger to Prince Nicæus at Athens, and to the great Hunniades. The people were so

excited throughout all Epirus, at this great and unthought-of intelligence, that they simultaneously rose in all the open country, and massacred the Turks, and the towns were only restrained in a forced submission to Amurath, by the strong garrisons of the Sultan.

Now Iskander was very anxious to effect the removal of these garrisons without loss of time, in order that if Amurath sent a great power against him, as he expected, the invading army might have nothing to rely upon but its own force, and that his attention might not in any way be diverted from effecting their overthrow. Therefore, as soon as his troops had rested, and he had formed his new recruits into some order, which, with their willing spirits, did not demand many days, Iskander set out from Croia, at the head of twelve thousand men, and marched against the strong city of Petrella, meeting in his way the remainder of the garrison of Croia on their return, who surrendered themselves to him at discretion. Petrella was only one day's march from Croia, and when Iskander arrived there he requested a conference with the governor, and told his tale so well, representing the late overthrow of the Turks by Hunniades, and the incapacity of Amurath at present to relieve him, that the Turkish commander agreed to deliver up the place, and leave the country with his troops, particularly as the alternative of Iskander to these easy terms was ever conquest without quarter. And thus, by a happy mixture of audacity and adroitness, the march of Iskander throughout Epirus was rather like a triumph than a campaign, the Turkish garrisons imitating, without any exception, the conduct of their comrades at Petrella, and dreading the fate of their comrades at the capital. In less than a month Iskander returned to Epirus, having delivered the whole country from the Moslem yoke.

Hitherto Iskander had heard nothing either of Hunniades or Nicæus. He learnt, therefore, with great interest, as he passed through the gates of the city, that the Prince of

Athens had arrived at Croia the preceding eve, and also that his messenger had returned from the Hungarian camp. Amid the acclamations of an enthusiastic people, Iskander once more ascended the citadel of Croia. Nicæus received him at the gate. Iskander sprang from his horse, and embraced his friend Hand in hand, and followed by their respective trains, they entered the fortress palace.

‘ Dear friend,’ said Iskander, when they were once more alone, ‘ you see we were right not to despair Two months have scarcely elapsed since we parted without a prospect, or with the most gloomy one, and now we are in a fair way of achieving all that we can desire. Epirus is free ! ’

‘ I came to claim my share in its emancipation,’ said Nicæus, with a smile, ‘ but Iskander is another Cæsar ! ’

‘ You will have many opportunities yet, believe me, Nicæus, of proving your courage and your patriotism,’ replied Iskander, ‘ Amurath will never allow this affair to pass over in this quiet manner I did not commence this struggle without a conviction that it would demand all the energy and patience of a long life. I shall be rewarded if I leave freedom as an heritage to my countrymen ; but for the rest, I feel that I bid farewell to every joy of life, except the ennobling consciousness of performing a noble duty. In the meantime, I understand a messenger awaits me here from the great Hunniades Unless that shield of Christendom maintain himself in his present position, our chance of ultimate security is feeble With his constant diversion in Bulgaria, we may contrive here to struggle into success You sometimes laugh at my sanguine temper, Nicæus To say the truth, I am more serene than sanguine, and was never more conscious of the strength of my opponent than now, when it appears that I have beaten him. Hark ! the people cheer. I love the people, Nicæus, who are ever influenced by genuine and generous feelings. They cheer as if they had once more gained a country Alas ! they little know what they must endure even at the best. Nay !

look not gloomy ; we have done great things, and will do more Who waits without there ? Demetrius ! Call the messenger from Lord Hunniades.'

An Epirot bearing a silken packet was now introduced, which he delivered to Iskander. Reverently touching the hand of his chieftain, the messenger then kissed his own and withdrew. Iskander broke the seal, and drew forth a letter from the silken cover.

'So ! this is well !' exclaimed the prince, with great animation, as he threw his quick eye over the letter. 'As I hoped and deemed, a most complete victory. Karam Bey himself a prisoner, baggage, standards, great guns, treasure Brave soldier of the Cross ! (may I prove so !). Your perfectly-devised movement (poh, poh !) Hah ! what is this ?' exclaimed Iskander, turning pale, his lip quivered, his eye looked dim. He walked to an arched window. His companion, who supposed that he was reading, did not disturb him

'Poor, poor Hunniades !' at length exclaimed Iskander, shaking his head

'What of him ?' inquired Nicæus, quickly

'The sharpest accident of war !' replied Iskander. 'It quite clouds my spirit. We must forget these things, we must forget Epirus ! he is not a patriot who can spare a thought for thee. And yet, so young, so beautiful, so gifted, so worthy of a hero ! when I saw her by her great father's side, sharing his toils, aiding his councils, supplying his necessities, methought I gazed upon a ministering angel ! upon '

'Stop, stop in mercy's name, Iskander !' exclaimed Nicæus, in a very agitated tone 'What is all this ? Surely no, surely not, surely Iduna '

'Tis she !'

'Dead ?' exclaimed Nicæus, rushing up to his companion, and seizing his arm.

'Worse, much worse !'

‘God of Heaven!’ exclaimed the young prince, with almost a frantic air ‘Tell me all, tell me all!’ This suspense fires my brain. Iskander, you know not what this woman is to me – the sole object of my being, the bane, the blessing of my life! Speak, dear friend, speak! I beseech you! Where is Iduna?’

‘A prisoner to the Turk’

‘Iduna a prisoner to the Turk! I’ll not believe it! Why do we wear swords? Where’s chivalry? Iduna, a prisoner to the Turk! ‘Tis false. It cannot be Iskander, you are a coward! I am a coward! All are cowards! A prisoner to the Turk! Iduna! What, the Rose of Christendom! has it been plucked by such a turbaned dog as Amurath? Farewell, Epirus! Farewell, classic Athens! Farewell, bright fields of Greece, and dreams that made them brighter! The sun of all my joy and hope is set, and set for ever!’

So saying, Nicæus, tearing his hair and garments, flung himself upon the floor, and hid his face in his robes

Iskander paced the room with a troubled step and thoughtful brow. After some minutes he leant down by the Prince of Athens, and endeavoured to console him.

‘It is in vain, Iskander, it is in vain,’ said Nicæus ‘I wish to die’

‘Were I a favoured lover, in such a situation,’ replied Iskander, ‘I should scarcely consider death my duty, unless the sacrifice of myself preserved my mistress’

‘Hah!’ exclaimed Nicæus, starting from the ground ‘Do you conceive, then, the possibility of rescuing her?’

‘If she live, she is a prisoner in the Scraglio at Adrianople. You are as good a judge as myself of the prospect that awaits your exertions. It is, without doubt, a difficult adventure, but such, methinks, as a Christian knight should scarcely shun’

‘To horse,’ exclaimed Nicæus, ‘To horse And yet what can I do? Were she in any other place but the

capital I might rescue her by force, but in the heart of their empire, it is impossible. Is there no ransom that can tempt the Turk? My principality would rise in the balance beside this jewel.'

'That were scarcely wise, and certainly not just,' replied Iskander; 'but ransom will be of no avail. Hunniades has already offered to restore Karam Bey, and all the prisoners of rank, and the chief trophies, and Amurath has refused to listen to any terms. The truth is, Iduna has found favour in the eyes of his son, the young Mahomed.'

'Holy Virgin! hast thou no pity on this Christian maid?' exclaimed Nicæus. 'The young Mahomed! Shall this licentious infidel ah! Iskander, dear, dear Iskander, you who have so much wisdom, and so much courage, you who can devise all things, and dare all things, help me, help me, on my knees I do beseech you, take up this lying cause of foul oppression, and for the sake of all you love and reverence, your creed, your country, and perchance your friend, let your great genius, like some solemn angel, haste to the rescue of the sweet Iduna, and save her, save her!'

'Some thoughts like these were rising in my mind when first I spoke,' replied Iskander. 'This is a better cue, far more becoming princes than boyish tears, and all the outward misery of woe, a tattered garment and dishevelled locks. Come, Nicæus, we have to struggle with a mighty fortune. Let us be firm as Fate itself.'

Chapter VIII

Immediately after his interview with Nicæus, Iskander summoned some of the chief citizens of Croia to the citadel, and submitting to them his arrangements for the administration of Epirus, announced the necessity of his instant departure for a short interval; and the same evening, ere

the moon had risen, himself and the Prince of Athens quitted the city, and proceeded in the direction of Adrianople. They travelled with great rapidity until they reached a small town upon the frontiers, where they halted for one day. Here, in the bazaar, Iskander purchased for himself the dress of an Armenian physician. In his long dark robes, and large round cap of black wool, his face and hands stained, and his beard and mustachios shaven, it seemed impossible that he could be recognised. Nicæus was habited as his page, in a dress of coarse red cloth, sitting tight to his form, with a red cap, with a long blue tassel. He carried a large bag containing drugs, some surgical instruments, and a few books. In this guise, as soon as the gates were open on the morrow, Iskander, mounted on a small mule, and Nicæus on a large donkey, the two Princes commenced the pass of the mountainous range, an arm of the Balkan which divided Epirus from Roumelia.

‘I broke the wind of the finest charger in all Asia when I last ascended these mountains,’ said Iskander, ‘I hope this day’s journey may be accepted as a sort of atonement.’

‘Faith! there is little doubt I am the best mounted of the two,’ said Nicæus. ‘However, I hope we shall return at a sharper pace.’

‘How came it, my Nicæus,’ said Iskander, ‘that you never mentioned to me the name of Iduna when we were at Athens. I little supposed when I made my sudden visit to Hunnades, that I was about to appeal to so fair a host. She is a rarely gifted lady.’

‘I knew of her being at the camp as little as yourself,’ replied the Prince of Athens, ‘and for the rest, the truth is, Iskander, there are some slight crosses in our loves, which Time, I hope, will fashion rightly.’ So saying Nicæus pricked on his donkey, and flung his stick at a bird which was perched on the branch of a tree. Iskander did not resume a topic to which his companion seemed disinclined. Their journey was tedious. Towards nightfall they reached

the summit of the usual track, and as the descent was difficult, they were obliged to rest until daybreak.

On the morrow they had a magnificent view of the rich plains of Roumelia, and in the extreme distance, the great city of Adrianople, its cupolas and minarets blazing and sparkling in the sun. This glorious prospect at once revived all their energies. It seemed that the moment of peril and of fate had arrived. They pricked on their sorry steeds; and on the morning of the next day presented themselves at the gates of the city. The thorough knowledge which Iskander possessed of the Turkish character obtained them an entrance, which was at one time almost doubtful, from the irritability and impatience of Nicæus. They repaired to a caravanserai of good repute in the neighbourhood of the Seraglio; and having engaged their rooms, the Armenian physician, attended by his page, visited several of the neighbouring coffee-houses, announcing, at the same time, his arrival, his profession, and his skill.

As Iskander felt pulses, examined tongues, and distributed drugs and charms, he listened with interest and amusement to the conversation of which he himself was often the hero. He found that the Turks had not yet recovered from their consternation at his audacity and success. They were still wondering, and if possible more astounded than indignant. The politicians of the coffee-houses, chiefly consisting of Janissaries, were loud in their murmurs. The popularity of Amurath had vanished before the triumph of Humniades, and the rise of Iskander.

‘But Allah has in some instances favoured the faithful,’ remarked Iskander, ‘I heard in my travels of your having captured a great princess of the Giaours.’

‘God is great!’ said an elderly Turk with a long white beard. ‘The Hakım congratulates the faithful because they have taken a woman!’

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‘God is great!’ said an elderly Turk with a long white beard. ‘The Hakım congratulates the faithful because they have taken a woman!’

‘ Not so merely,’ replied Iskander , ‘ I heard the woman was a princess. If so, the people of Franguestan will pay any ransom for their great women , and by giving up this fair Giaour you may free many of the faithful ’

‘ Mashallah !’ said another ancient Turk. sipping his coffee ‘ The Hakım speaks wisely ’

‘ May I murder my mother !’ exclaimed a young Janissary, with great indignation. ‘ But this is the very thing that makes me wild against Amurath. Is not this princess a daughter of that accursed Giaour, that dog of dogs, Hunniades ? and has he not offered for her ransom our brave Karam Bey himself and his chosen warriors ? and has not Amurath said nay ? And why has he said nay ? Because his son, the Prince Mahomed, instead of fighting against the Giaours, has looked upon one of their women, and has become a Mejnoun Pah ! May I murder my mother, but if the Giaours were in full march to the city. I’d not fight. And let him tell this to the Cadi who dares ; for there are ten thousand of us, and we have sworn by the Kettle, but we will not fight for Giaours, or those who love Giaours !’

‘ If you mean me, Ah, about going to the Cadi,’ said the chief eunuch of Mahomed, who was standing by, ‘ let me tell you I am no tale-bearer, and scorn to do an unmanly act. The young prince can beat the Giaours without the aid of those who are noisy enough in a coffee-house, when they are quiet enough in the field And, for the rest of the business, you may all ease your hearts , for the Frangy princess you talk of is pining away, and will soon die. The Sultan has offered a hundred purses of gold to any one who cures her ; but the gold will never be counted by the Hasnadar, or I will double it ’

‘ Try your fortune, Hakım,’ said several laughing loungers to Iskander

‘ Allah has stricken the Frangy princess,’ said the old Turk with a white beard.

‘He will strike all Giaours,’ said his ancient companion, sipping his coffee. ‘’Tis so written.’

‘Well! I do not like to hear of women slaves pining to death,’ said the young Janissary, in a softened tone, ‘particularly when they are young. Amurath should have ransomed her, or he might have given her to one of his officers, or any young fellow that had particularly distinguished himself.’ And so, twirling his mustachios, and flinging down his piastre, the young Janissary strutted out of the coffee-house

‘When we were young,’ said the old Turk with the white beard to his companion, shaking his head, ‘when we were young

‘We conquered Anatolia, and never opened our mouths,’ rejoined his companion

‘I never offered an opinion till I was sixty,’ said the old Turk; ‘and then it was one which had been in our family for a century’

‘No wonder Hunniades carries everything before him,’ said his companion.

‘And that accursed Iskander,’ said the old man.

The chief eunuch, finishing his vase of sherbet, moved away. The Armenian physician followed him

Chapter IX

The chief eunuch turned into a burial-ground, through which a way led, by an avenue of cypress-trees, to the quarter of the Seraglio. The Armenian physician, accompanied by his page, followed him.

‘Noble sir!’ said the Armenian physician, ‘may I trespass for a moment on your lordship’s attention?’

‘Worthy Hakim, is it you?’ replied the chief eunuch, turning round with an encouraging smile of courteous condescension, ‘your pleasure?’

‘ I would speak to you of important matters,’ said the physician.

The eunuch carelessly seated himself on a richly-carved tomb, and crossing his legs with an air of pleasant superiority, adjusted a fine emerald that sparkled on his finger, and bade the Hakim address him without hesitation

‘ I am a physician,’ said the Armenian

The eunuch nodded

‘ And I heard your lordship in the coffee-house mention that the Sultan, our sublime Master, had offered a rich reward to any one who could effect the cure of a favourite captive ’

‘ No less a reward than one hundred purses of gold,’ remarked the eunuch. ‘ The reward is proportioned to the exigency of the case. Believe me, worthy sir, it is desperate ’

‘ With mortal means,’ replied the Armenian, ‘ but I possess a talisman of magical influence, which no disorder can resist. I would fain try its efficacy.’

‘ This is not the first talisman that has been offered us, worthy doctor,’ said the eunuch, smiling incredulously

‘ But the first that has been offered on these terms,’ said the Armenian ‘ Let me cure the captive, and of the one hundred purses, a moiety shall belong to yourself. Ay ! so confident am I of success, that I deem it no hazard to commence our contract by this surety.’ And so saying, the Armenian took from his finger a gorgeous carbuncle, and offered it to the eunuch. The worthy dependant of the Seraglio had a great taste in jewellery. He examined the stone with admiration, and placed it on his finger with complacency ‘ I require no inducements to promote the interests of science, and the purposes of charity,’ said the eunuch, with a patronizing air ‘ ’Tis assuredly a pretty stone, and, as the memorial of an ingenious stranger, whom I respect, I shall, with pleasure, retain it. You were saying something about a talisman. Are you serious ? I doubt not that there are means which might obtain you the

desired trial, but the Prince Mahomed is as violent when displeased or disappointed as munificent when gratified. Cure this Christian captive, and we may certainly receive the promised purses: fail, and your head will as assuredly be flung into the Seraglio moat, to say nothing of my own.'

'Most noble sir!' said the physician, 'I am willing to undertake the experiment on the terms you mention. Rest assured that the patient, if alive, must, with this remedy, speedily recover. You marvel! Believe me, had you witnessed the cures which it has already effected, you would only wonder at its otherwise incredible influence.'

'You have the advantage,' replied the eunuch, 'of addressing a man who has seen something of the world. I travel every year to Anatolia with the Prince Mahomed. Were I a narrow-minded bigot, and had never been five miles from Adrianople in the whole course of my life, I might indeed be sceptical. But I am a patron of science, and have heard of talismans. How much might this ring weigh, think you?'

'I have heard it spoken of as a carbuncle of uncommon size,' replied the Armenian.

'Where did you say you lodged, Hakim?'

'At the Khan of Bedreddin.'

'A very proper dwelling. Well, we shall see. Have you more jewels? I might, perhaps, put you in the way of parting with some at good prices. The Khan of Bedreddin is very conveniently situated. I may, perhaps, towards evening, taste your coffee at the Khan of Bedreddin, and we will talk of this said talisman. Allah be with you, worthy Hakim!' The eunuch nodded, not without encouragement, and went his way.

'Anxiety alone enabled me to keep my countenance,' said Nicæus. 'A patron of science, forsooth! Of all the insolent, shallow-brained, rapacious coxcombs.'

'Hush, my friend!' said Iskander, with a smile. 'The chief eunuch of the heir apparent of the Turkish empire is

a far greater man than a poor prince, or a proscribed rebel. This worthy can do our business, and I trust will. He clearly bites, and a richer bait will, perhaps, secure him. In the meantime, we must be patient, and remember whose destiny is at stake.'

Chapter X

The chief eunuch did not keep the adventurous companions long in suspense, for, before the muezzin had announced the close of day from the minarets, he had reached the Khan of Bedreddin, and inquired for the Armenian physician

'We have no time to lose,' said the eunuch to Iskander 'Bring with you whatever you may require, and follow me'

The eunuch led the way, Iskander and Nicæus maintaining a respectful distance. After proceeding down several streets, they arrived at the burial-ground, where they had conversed in the morning, and when they had entered this more retired spot, the eunuch fell back, and addressed his companion

'Now, worthy Hakim,' he said, 'if you deceive me, I will never patronize a man of science again. I found an opportunity of speaking to the Prince this afternoon of your talisman, and he has taken from my representations such a fancy for its immediate proof, that I found it quite impossible to postpone its trial even until to-morrow. I mentioned the terms. I told the Prince your life was the pledge. I said nothing of the moiety of the reward, worthy Hakim. That is an affair between ourselves. I trust to your honour, and I always act thus with men of science.'

'I shall not disgrace my profession or your confidence, rest assured,' replied Iskander. 'And am I to see the captive this night?'

'I doubt it not. Are you prepared? We might, perhaps, gain a little time, if very necessary.'

‘ By no means, sir ; Truth is ever prepared.’

Thus conversing, they passed through the burial-ground, and approached some high, broad walls, forming a terrace, and planted with young sycamore trees. The eunuch tapped, with his silver stick, at a small gate, which opened, and admitted them into a garden, full of large clumps of massy shrubs. Through these a winding walk led for some way, and then conducted them to an open lawn, on which was situate a vast and irregular building. As they approached the pile, a young man of imperious aspect rushed forward from a gate, and abruptly accosted Iskander.

‘ Are you the Armenian physician ? ’ he inquired

Iskander bowed assent.

‘ Have you got your talisman ? You know the terms ? Cure this Christian girl and you shall name your own reward ; fail, and I shall claim your forfeit head.’

‘ The terms are well understood, mighty Prince,’ said Iskander, for the young man was no less a personage than the son of Amurath, and future conqueror of Constantinople, ‘ but I am confident there will be no necessity for the terror of Christendom claiming any other heads than those of his enemies.’

‘ Kafilis will conduct you at once to your patient,’ said Mahomed. ‘ For myself, I cannot rest until I know the result of your visit I shall wander about these gardens, and destroy the flowers, which is the only pleasure now left me ’

Kafilis motioned to his companions to advance, and they entered the Seraglio

At the end of a long gallery they came to a great portal, which Kafilis opened, and Iskander and Nicæus for a moment supposed that they had arrived at the chief hall of the Tower of Babel. but they found the shrill din only proceeded from a large company of women, who were employed in distilling the rare atar of the jasmine flower. All their voices ceased on the entrance of the strangers,

I trust, miscalculated my character. I am a slave, and unless heaven will interpose, must soon be a dishonoured one. My freedom and my fame are alike at stake. There is no danger, and no suffering which I will not gladly welcome, provided there be even a remote chance of regaining my liberty and securing my honour.'

'You are in the mind I counted on. Now, mark my words, dear lady. Seize an opportunity this evening of expressing to your gaolers that you have already experienced some benefit from my visit, and announce your rising confidence in my skill. In the meantime I will make such a report that our daily meetings will not be difficult. For the present, farewell. The Prince Mahomed waits without, and I would exchange some words with him before I go.'

'And must we part without my being acquainted with the generous friends to whom I am indebted for an act of devotion which almost reconciles me to my sad fate?' said Iduna. 'You will not, perhaps, deem the implicit trust reposed in you by one whom you have no interest to deceive, and who, if deceived, cannot be placed in a worse position than she at present fills, as a very gratifying mark of confidence, yet that trust is reposed in you, and let me, at least, soothe the galling dreariness of my solitary hours, by the recollection of the friends to whom I am indebted for a deed of friendship which has filled me with a feeling of wonder from which I have not yet recovered.'

'The person who has penetrated the Seraglio of Constantinople in disguise to rescue the Lady Iduna,' answered Iskander, 'is the Prince Nicæus.'

'Nicæus!' exclaimed Iduna, in an agitated tone. 'The voice to which I listen is surely not that of the Prince Nicæus, nor the form on which I gaze,' she added, as she unveiled. Beside her stood the tall figure of the Armenian physician. She beheld his swarthy and unrecognized countenance. She cast her dark eyes around with an air of beautiful perplexity.

‘I am a friend of the Prince Nicæus,’ said the physician. ‘He is here. Shall he advance? Alexis,’ called out Iskander, not waiting for her reply. The page of the physician came forward, but the eunuch accompanied him. ‘All is right,’ said Iskander to Kaffis. ‘We are sure of our hundred purses. But, without doubt, with any other aid, the case were desperate.’

‘There is but one God,’ said the eunuch, polishing his carbuncle, with a visage radiant as the gem. ‘I never repented patronizing men of science. The prince waits without. Come along!’ He took Iskander by the arm. ‘Where is your boy? What are you doing there, sir?’ inquired the eunuch, sharply, of Nicæus, who was tarrying behind, and kissing the hand of Iduna.

‘I was asking the lady for a favour to go to the coffee-house with,’ replied Nicæus, ‘you forget that I am to have none of the hundred purses.’

‘True,’ said the eunuch; ‘there is something in that. Here, boy, here is a piastre for you. I like to encourage men of science, and all that belong to them. Do not go and spend it all in one morning, boy, and when the fair captive is cured, if you remind me, boy, perhaps I may give you another.’

Chapter XI

Kaffis and his charge again reached the garden. The twilight was nearly past. A horseman galloped up to them, followed by several running footmen. It was the prince.

‘Well, Hakım,’ he inquired, in his usual abrupt style, ‘can you cure her?’

‘Yes,’ answered Iskander, firmly.

‘Now listen, Hakım,’ said Mahomed. ‘I must very shortly leave the city, and proceed into Epirus at the head of our troops. I have sworn two things, and I have sworn

them by the holy stone Ere the new moon, I will have the heart of Iduna and the head of Iskander !’

The physician bowed.

‘ If you can so restore the health of this Frangy girl,’ continued Mahomed, ‘ that she may attend me within ten days into Epirus, you shall claim from my treasury what sum you like, and become physician to the Seraglio. What say you ? ’

‘ My hope and my belief is,’ replied Iskander, ‘ that within ten days she may breathe the air of Epirus ’

‘ By my father’s beard, you are a man after my own heart,’ exclaimed the prince, ‘ and since thou dealest in talismans, Hakim, can you give me a charm that will secure me a meeting with this Epirot rebel within the term, so that I may keep my oath. What say you ? what say you ? ’

‘ There are such spells,’ replied Iskander. ‘ But mark, I can only secure the meeting, not the head ’

‘ That is my part,’ said Mahomed, with an arrogant sneer ‘ But the meeting, the meeting ? ’

‘ You know the fountain of Kallista in Epirus Its virtues are renowned ’

‘ I have heard of it ’

‘ Plunge your scimitar in its midnight waters thrice, on the eve of the new moon, and each time summon the enemy you would desire to meet He will not fail you ’

‘ If you cure the captive, I will credit the legend, and keep the appointment,’ replied Mahomed, thoughtfully.

‘ I have engaged to do that,’ replied the physician

‘ Well, then, I shall redeem my pledge,’ said the prince

‘ But mind,’ said the physician, ‘ while I engage to cure the lady and produce the warrior, I can secure your highness neither the heart of the one nor the head of the other ’

‘ ’Tis understood,’ said Mahomed.

Chapter XII

The Armenian physician did not fail to attend his captive patient at an early hour on the ensuing morn. His patron Kafilis received him with an encouraging smile

‘The talisman already works,’ said the eunuch: ‘she has passed a good night, and confesses to an improvement. Our purses are safe. Methinks I already count the gold But I say, worthy Hakim, come hither, come hither,’ and Kafilis looked around to be sure that no one was within hearing ‘I say,’ and here he put on a very mysterious air indeed, ‘the prince is generous? you understand? We go shares We shall not quarrel. I never yet repented patronizing a man of science, and I am sure I never shall. The prince, you see, is violent, but generous I would not cure her too soon, eh?’

‘You take a most discreet view of affairs,’ responded Iskander, with an air of complete assent, and they entered the chamber of the tower.

Iduna performed her part with dexterity, but, indeed, it required less skill than herself and her advisers had at first imagined Her malady, although it might have ended fatally, was in its origin entirely mental, and the sudden prospect of freedom, and of restoration to her country and her family, at a moment when she had delivered herself up to despair, afforded her a great and instantaneous benefit She could not, indeed, sufficiently restrain her sputs, and smiled incredulously when Iskander mentioned the impending exertion and fatigues with doubt and apprehension. His anxiety to return immediately to Epirus, determined him to adopt the measures for her rescue without loss of time, and on his third visit, he prepared her for making the great attempt on the ensuing morn. Hitherto Iskander had refrained from revealing himself to Iduna. He was induced to adopt this conduct by

various considerations. He could no longer conceal from himself that the daughter of Hunniades exercised an influence over his feelings which he was unwilling to encourage. His sincere friendship for Nicæus, and his conviction that it was his present duty to concentrate all his thought and affection in the cause of his country, would have rendered him anxious to have resisted any emotions of the kind, even could he have flattered himself that there was any chance of their being returned by the object of his rising passion. But Iskander was as modest as he was brave and gifted. The disparity of age between himself and Iduna appeared an insuperable barrier to his hopes, even had there been no other obstacle. Iskander struggled with his love, and with his strong mind the struggle, though painful, was not without success. He felt that he was acting in a manner which must ultimately tend to the advantage of his country, the happiness of his friend, and perhaps the maintenance of his own self-respect. For he had too much pride not to be sensible to the bitterness of rejection.

Had he perceived more indications of a cordial feeling subsisting between Nicæus and Iduna, he would perhaps not have persisted in maintaining his disguise. But he had long suspected that the passion of the Prince of Athens was not too favourably considered by the daughter of Hunniades, and he was therefore exceedingly anxious that Nicæus should possess all the credit of the present adventure, which Iskander scarcely doubted, if successful, would allow Nicæus to urge irresistible claims to the heart of a mistress whom he had rescued at the peril of his life from slavery and dishonour, to offer rank, reputation, and love. Iskander took, therefore, several opportunities of leading Iduna to believe that he was merely a confidential agent of Nicæus, and that the whole plan of her rescue from the Seraglio of Adrianople had been planned by his young friend. In the meantime, during the three days on which

they had for short intervals met, very few words had been interchanged between Nicæus and his mistress. Those words, indeed, had been to him of the most inspiring nature, and expressed such a deep sense of gratitude, and such lively regard, that Nicæus could no longer resist the delightful conviction that he had at length created a permanent interest in her heart. Often he longed to rush to her couch, and press her hand to his lips. Even the anticipation of future happiness could not prevent him from envying the good fortune of Iskander, who was allowed to converse with her without restraint ; and bitterly, on their return to the khan, did he execrate the pompous eunuch for all the torture which he occasioned him by his silly conversation, and the petty tyranny of office with which Kafilis always repressed his attempts to converse for a moment with Iduna.

In the meantime all Adrianople sounded with the preparations for the immediate invasion of Epirus, and the return of Iskander to his country became each hour more urgent. Everything being prepared, the adventurers determined on the fourth morning to attempt the rescue. They repaired as usual to the Serail, and were attended by Kafilis to the chamber of the tower, who congratulated Iskander on their way on the rapid convalescence of the captive. When they had fairly entered the chamber, the physician being somewhat in advance, Nicæus, who was behind, commenced proceedings by knocking down the eunuch, and Iskander instantly turning round to his assistance, they succeeded in gagging and binding the alarmed and astonished Kafilis. Iduna then habited herself in a costume exactly similar to that worn by Nicæus, and which her friends had brought to her in their bag. Iskander and Iduna then immediately quitted the Serail without notice or suspicion, and hurried to the khan, where they mounted their horses, that were in readiness, and hastened without a moment's loss of time to a fountain without the

gates, where they awaited the arrival of Nicæus with anxiety. After remaining a few minutes in the chamber of the tower, the Prince of Athens stole out, taking care to secure the door upon Kaslus. He descended the staircase, and escaped through the Serail without meeting any one, and had nearly reached the gate of the gardens, when he was challenged by some of the eunuch guard at a little distance.

‘Hilloa!’ exclaimed one, ‘I thought you passed just now?’

‘So I did,’ replied Nicæus, with nervous effrontery; ‘but I came back for my bag, which I left behind,’ and, giving them no time to reflect, he pushed his way through the gate with all the impudence of a page. He rushed through the burial-ground, hurried through the streets, mounted his horse, and galloped through the gates. Iskander and Iduna were in sight, he waved his hand for them at once to proceed, and in a moment, without exchanging a word, they were all galloping at full speed, nor did they breathe their horses until sunset.

By nightfall they had reached a small wood of chestnut-trees, where they rested for two hours, more for the sake of their steeds than their own refreshment, for anxiety prevented Iduna from indulging in any repose, as much as excitement prevented her from feeling any fatigue. Iskander lit a fire and prepared their rough meal, unharnessed the horses, and turned them out to their pasture. Nicæus made Iduna a couch of fern, and supported her head, while, in deference to his entreaties, she endeavoured in vain to sleep. Before midnight they were again on their way, and proceeded at a rapid pace towards the mountains, until a few hours before noon, when their horses began to sink under the united influence of their previous exertions and the increasing heat of the day. Iskander looked serious, and often threw a backward glance in the direction of Adrianople.

‘ We must be beyond pursuit,’ said Nicæus. ‘ I dare say poor Kafis is still gagged and bound.’

‘ Could we but reach the mountains,’ replied his companion, ‘ I should have little fear, but I counted upon our steeds carrying us there without faltering. We cannot reckon upon more than three hours’ start, prince. Our friend Kafis is too important a personage to be long missed.’

‘ The Holy Virgin befriend us !’ said the Lady Iduna. ‘ I can urge my poor horse no more.’

They had now ascended a small rising ground, which gave them a wide prospect over the plain. Iskander halted and threw an anxious glance around him.

‘ There are some horsemen in the distance whom I do not like,’ said the physician.

‘ I see them,’ said Nicæus ; ‘ travellers like ourselves.’

‘ Let us die sooner than be taken,’ said Iduna.

‘ Move on,’ said the physician, ‘ and let me observe these horsemen alone. I would there were some forest at hand. In two hours we may gain the mountains.’

The daughter of Hunniades and the Prince of Athens descended the rising ground. Before them, but at a considerable distance, was a broad and rapid river, crossed by a ruinous Roman bridge. The opposite bank of the river was the termination of a narrow plain, which led immediately to the mountains.

‘ Fair Iduna, you are safe,’ said the Prince of Athens.

‘ Dear Nicæus,’ replied his companion, ‘ imagine what I feel. It is too wild a moment to express my gratitude.’

‘ I trust that Iduna will never express her *gratitude* to Nicæus,’ answered the prince ; ‘ it is not, I assure you, a favourite word with him.’

、 Their companion rejoined them, urging his wearied horse to its utmost speed

‘ Nicæus !’ he called out, ‘ halt !’

They stopped their willing horses.

'How now ! my friend,' said the prince ; 'you look grave'

'Lady Iduna !' said the Armenian, 'we are pursued'

Hitherto the prospect of success, and the consciousness of the terrible destiny that awaited failure, had supported Iduna under exertions, which under any other circumstances must have proved fatal. But to learn, at the very moment that she was congratulating herself on the felicitous completion of their daring enterprise, that that dreaded failure was absolutely impending, demanded too great an exertion of her exhausted energies. She turned pale ; she lifted up her imploring hands and eyes to heaven in speechless agony, and then, bending down her head, wept with unrestrained and harrowing violence. The distracted Nicæus sprung from his horse, endeavoured to console the almost insensible Iduna, and then woefully glancing at his fellow adventurer, wrung his hands in despair. His fellow adventurer seemed lost in thought.

'They come,' said Nicæus, starting ; 'methinks I see one on the brow of the hill. Away ! fly ! Let us at least die fighting. Dear, dear Iduna, would that my life could ransom thine ! O God ! this is indeed agony.'

'Escape is impossible,' said Iduna, in a tone of calmness which astonished them. 'They must overtake us. Alas ! brave friends, I have brought ye to this ! Pardon me, pardon me ! I am ashamed of my selfish grief. Ascribe it to other causes than a narrow spirit and a weak mind. One course alone is left us. We must not be taken prisoners. Ye are warriors, and can die as such. I am only a woman, but I am the daughter of Hunnades. Nicæus, you are my father's friend, I beseech you sheathe your dagger in my breast.'

The prince in silent agony pressed his hands to his sight. His limbs quivered with terrible emotion. Suddenly he advanced and threw himself at the feet of his hitherto silent comrade. 'Oh ! Iskander !' exclaimed Nicæus,

‘great and glorious friend! my head and heart are both too weak for these awful trials; save her, save her!’

‘Iskander!’ exclaimed the thunderstruck Iduna.
‘Iskander!’

‘I have, indeed, the misfortune to be Iskander, beloved lady,’ he replied. ‘This is, indeed, a case almost of desperation, but if I have to endure more than most men, I have, to inspire me, influences which fall to the lot of few, yourself and Epirus. Come! Nicæus, there is but one chance, we must gain the bridge.’ Thus speaking, Iskander caught Iduna in his arms, and remounting his steed, and followed by the Prince of Athens, hurried towards the river.

‘The water is not fordable,’ said Iskander, when they had arrived at its bank. ‘The bridge I shall defend; and it will go hard if I do not keep them at bay long enough for you and Iduna to gain the mountains. Away; think no more of me; nay! no tear, dear lady, or you will unman me. An inspiring smile, and all will go well. Hasten to Croia, and let nothing tempt you to linger in the vicinity, with the hope of my again joining you. Believe me, we shall meet again, but act upon what I say, as if they were my dying words. God bless you, Nicæus! No murmuring. For once let the physician, indeed, command his page. Gentle lady, commend me to your father. Would I had such a daughter in Epirus, to head my trusty brethren if I fall. Tell the great Hunniades my legacy to him is my country. Farewell, farewell!’

‘I will not say farewell!’ exclaimed Iduna, ‘I too can fight. I will stay and die with you.’

‘See they come!’ Believe me I shall conquer. Fly, fly, thou noble girl! Guard her well, Nicæus. God bless thee, boy! Live and be happy. Nay, nay, not another word. The farther ye are both distant, trust me, the stronger will be my arm. Indeed, indeed, I do beseech ye, fly!’

Nicæus placed the weeping Iduna in her saddle, and

after leading her horse over the narrow and broken bridge, mounted his own, and then they ascended together the hilly and winding track. Iskander watched them as they went. Often Iduna waved her kerchief to her forlorn champion. In the meantime Iskander tore off his Armenian robes and flung them into the river, tried his footing on the position he had taken up, stretched his limbs, examined his daggers, flourished his scimitar.

The bridge would only permit a single rider to pass abreast. It was supported by three arches, the centre one of considerable size, the others small, and rising out of the shallow water on each side. In many parts the parapet wall was broken, in some even the pathway was almost impassable from the masses of fallen stone, and the dangerous fissures. In the centre of the middle arch was a huge keystone, on which was sculptured, in high relief, an enormous helmet, which indeed gave, among the people of the country, a title to the bridge.

A band of horsemen dashed at full speed, with a loud shout, down the hill. They checked their horses, when to their astonishment they found Iskander with his drawn scimitar, prepared to resist their passage. But they paused only for a moment, and immediately attempted to swim the river. But their exhausted horses drew back with a strong instinct from the rushing waters: one of the band alone, mounted on a magnificent black mare, succeeding in his purpose. The rider was half-way in the stream, his high-bred steed snorting and struggling in the strong current. Iskander, with the same ease as if he were plucking the ripe fruit from a tree, took up a ponderous stone, and hurled it with fatal precision at his adventurous enemy. The rider shrieked and fell, and rose no more. The mare, relieved from her burden, exerted all her failing energies, and succeeded in gaining the opposite bank. There, rolling herself in the welcome pasture, and neighing with a note of triumph, she revelled in her hard escape.

‘Cut down the Giaour!’ exclaimed one of the horsemen, and he dashed at the bridge. His fragile blade shivered into a thousand pieces as it crossed the scimitar of Iskander, and in a moment his bleeding head fell over the parapet.

Instantly the whole band, each emulous of revenging his comrades, rushed without thought at Iskander, and endeavoured to overpower him by their irresistible charge. His scimitar flashed like lightning. The two foremost of his enemies fell, but the impulse of the numbers prevailed, and each instant, although dealing destruction with every blow, he felt himself losing ground. At length he was on the centre of the centre arch, an eminent position, which allowed him for a moment to keep them at bay, and gave him breathing time. Suddenly he made a desperate charge, clove the head of the leader of the band in two, and beat them back several yards; then swiftly returning to his former position, he summoned all his supernatural strength, and stamping on the mighty, but mouldering keystone, he forced it from its form, and broke the masonry of a thousand years. Amid a loud and awful shriek, horses and horsemen and the dissolving fragments of the scene for a moment mingled as it were in airy chaos, and then plunged with a horrible plash into the fatal depths below. Some fell, and, stunned by the massy fragments, rose no more; others struggled again into light, and gained with difficulty their old shore. Amid them, Iskander, unhurt, swam like a river god, and stabbed to the heart the only strong swimmer that was making his way in the direction of Epirus. Drenched and exhausted, Iskander at length stood upon the opposite margin, and wrung his garments, while he watched the scene of strange destruction.

Three or four exhausted wretches were lying bruised and breathless on the opposite bank: one drowned horse was stranded near them, caught by the rushes. Of all that brave company the rest had vanished, and the broad, and

blue, and sunny waters rushed without a shadow beneath the two remaining arches.

‘Iduna ! thou art safe,’ exclaimed Iskander. ‘Now for Epirus !’ So saying, he seized the black mare, renovated by her bath and pasture, and vaulting on her back, was in a few minutes bounding over his native hills.

Chapter XIII

In the meantime let us not forget the Prince of Athens and the Lady Iduna. These adventurous companions soon lost sight of their devoted champion, and entered a winding ravine, which gradually brought them to the summit of the first chain of the Epirot mountains. From it they looked down upon a vast and rocky valley, through which several mule tracks led in various directions, and entered the highest barrier of the mountains, which rose before them covered with forests of chestnut and ilex. Nicæus chose the track which he considered least tempting to pursuit, and towards sunset they had again entered a ravine washed by a mountain stream. The course of the waters had made the earth fertile and beautiful. Wild shrubs of gay and pleasant colours refreshed their wearied eye-sight, and the perfume of aromatic plants invigorated their jaded senses. Upon the bank of the river, too, a large cross of roughly-carved wood brought comfort to their Christian hearts, and while the holy emblem filled them with hope and consolation, and seemed an omen of refuge from their Moslem oppressors, a venerable Eremite, with a long white beard descending over his dark robes, and leaning on a staff of thorn, came forth from an adjoining cavern to breathe the evening air and pour forth his evening orisons.

Iduna and Nicæus had hitherto prosecuted their sorrowful journey almost in silence. Exhausted with anxiety, affliction, and bodily fatigue, with difficulty the daughter

of Hunniades could preserve her seat upon her steed. One thought alone interested her, and by its engrossing influence maintained her under all her sufferings, the memory of Iskander. Since she first met him, at the extraordinary interview in her father's pavilion, often had the image of the hero recurred to her fancy, often had she mused over his great qualities and strange career. His fame, so dangerous to female hearts, was not diminished by his presence. And now, when Iduna recollected that she was indebted to him for all that she held dear, that she owed to his disinterested devotion, not only life, but all that renders life desirable, honour and freedom, country and kindred, that image was invested with associations and with sentiments, which, had Iskander himself been conscious of their existence, would have lent redoubled vigour to his arm, and fresh inspiration to his energy. More than once Iduna had been on the point of inquiring of Nicæus the reason which had induced alike him and Iskander to preserve so strictly the disguise of his companion. But a feeling which she did not choose to analyse, struggled successfully with her curiosity : she felt a reluctance to speak of Iskander to the Prince of Athens. In the meantime Nicæus himself was not apparently very anxious of conversing upon the subject, and after the first rapid expressions of fear and hope as to the situation of their late comrade, they relapsed into silence, seldom broken by Nicæus, but to deplore the sufferings of his mistress, lamentations which Iduna answered with a faint smile.

The refreshing scene wherein they had now entered, and the cheering appearance of the Eremite, were subjects of mutual congratulation, and Nicæus, somewhat advancing, claimed the attention of the holy man, announcing their faith, imprisonment, escape, and sufferings, and entreating hospitality and refuge. The Eremite pointed with his staff to the winding path, which ascended the bank of the river to the cavern, and welcomed the pilgrims. in

the name of their blessed Saviour, to his wild abode and simple fare.

The cavern widened when they entered, and comprised several small apartments. It was a work of the early Christians, who had found a refuge in their days of persecution, and art had completed the beneficent design of nature. The cavern was fresh, and sweet, and clean. Heaven smiled upon its pious inmate through an aperture in the roof; the floor was covered with rushes, in one niche rested a brazen cross, and in another a perpetual lamp burnt before a picture, where Madonna smiled with meek tenderness upon her young divinity.

The Eremite placed upon a block of wood, the surface of which he had himself smoothed, some honey, some dried fish, and a wooden bowl filled from the pure stream that flowed beneath them. a simple meal, but welcome His guests seated themselves upon a rushy couch, and while they refreshed themselves, he gently inquired the history of their adventures. As it was evident that the Eremite, from her apparel, mistook the sex of Iduna, Nicæus thought fit not to undeceive him, but passed her off as his brother. He described themselves as two Athenian youths, who had been captured while serving as volunteers under the great Hunniades, and who had effected their escape from Adrianople under circumstances of great peril and difficulty, and when he had gratified the Eremite's curiosity respecting their Christian brethren in Paynim lands, and sympathetically marvelled with him at the advancing fortunes of the Crescent, Nicæus, who perceived that Iduna stood in great need of rest, mentioned the fatigues of his more fragile brother, and requested permission for him to retire. Whereupon the Eremite himself, fetching a load of fresh rushes, arranged them in one of the cells, and invited the fair Iduna to repose. The daughter of Hunniades, first humbling herself before the altar of the Virgin, and offering her gratitude for all the late mercies vouchsafed unto her, and then

bidding a word of peace to her host and her companion, withdrew to her hard-earned couch, and soon was buried in a sleep as sweet and innocent as herself.

But repose fell not upon the cyclops of Nicæus in spite of all his labours. The heart of the Athenian Prince was distracted by the two most powerful of passions, Love and Jealousy ; and when the Eremite, pointing out to his guest his allotted resting-place, himself retired to his regular and simple slumbers, Nicæus quitted the cavern, and standing upon the bank of the river, gazed in abstraction upon the rushing waters foaming in the moonlight. The Prince of Athens, with many admirable qualities, was one of those men who are influenced only by their passions, and who, in the affairs of life, are invariably guided by their imagination instead of their reason. At present all thought and feeling, all considerations, and all circumstances, merged in the overpowering love he entertained for Iduna, his determination to obtain her at all cost and peril, and his resolution that she should never again meet Iskander, except as the wife of Nicæus. Compared with this paramount object, the future seemed to vanish. The emancipation of his country, the welfare of his friend, even the maintenance of his holy creed, all those great and noble objects for which, under other circumstances, he would have been prepared to sacrifice his fortune and his life, no longer interested or influenced him ; and while the legions of the Crescent were on the point of pouring into Greece to crush that patriotic and Christian cause over which Iskander and himself had so often mused, whose interests the disinterested absence of Iskander, occasioned solely by his devotion to Nicæus, had certainly endangered, and perhaps, could the events of the last few hours be known, even sacrificed, the Prince of Athens resolved, unless Iduna would consent to become his, at once to carry off the daughter of Hunniades to some distant country. Nor indeed, even with his easily excited vanity, was Nicæus sanguine of obtaining his purpose by

less violent means. He was already a rejected suitor, and under circumstances which scarcely had left hope. Nothing but the sole credit of her chivalric rescue could perhaps have obtained for him the interest in the heart of Iduna which he coveted. For while this exploit proffered an irresistible claim to her deepest gratitude, it indicated also, on the part of her deliverer, the presence and possession of all those great qualities, the absence of which in the character and conduct of her suitor, Iduna had not, at a former period, endeavoured to conceal to be the principal cause of his rejection. And now, by the unhappy course of circumstances, the very deed on which he counted, with sanguine hope, as the sure means of his success, seemed as it were to have placed him in a still inferior situation than before. The constant society of his mistress had fanned to all its former force and ardour the flame which, apart from her and hopeless, he had endeavoured to repress, while, on the other hand, he could not conceal from himself, that Iduna must feel that he had played in these great proceedings but a secondary part, that all the genius and all the generosity of the exploit rested with Iskander, who, after having obtained her freedom by so much energy, peril, sagacity and skill, had secured it by a devoted courage which might shame all the knights of Christendom, perhaps, too, had secured it by his own life.

What if Iskander were no more? It was a great contingency. The eternal servitude of Greece, and the shameful triumph of the Crescent, were involved, perhaps, in that single event. And could the possession of Iduna compensate for such disgrace and infamy? Let us not record the wild response of passion.

It was midnight ere the restless Nicæus, more exhausted by his agitating reverie than by his previous exertions, returned into the cavern, and found refuge in sleep from all his disquietudes.

Chapter XIV

The Eremite rose with the sun ; and while he was yet at matins, was joined by Iduna, refreshed and cheerful after her unusual slumbers. After performing their devotions, her venerable host proposed that they should go forth and enjoy the morning air. So, descending the precipitous bank of the river, he led the way to a small glen, the bed of a tributary rivulet, now nearly exhausted. Beautiful clumps of birch trees, and tall thin poplars, rose on each side among the rocks, which were covered with bright mosses, and parasitical plants of gay and various colours. One side of the glen was touched with the golden and grateful beams of the rising sun, and the other was in deep shadow.

‘Here you can enjoy nature and freedom in security,’ said the Eremite, ‘for your enemies, if they have not already given up their pursuit, will scarcely search this sweet solitude.’

‘It is indeed sweet, holy father,’ said Iduna ; ‘but the captive, who has escaped from captivity, can alone feel all its sweetness.’

‘It is true,’ said the Eremite ; ‘I also have been a captive.’

‘Indeed ! holy father. To the Infidels ?’

‘To the Infidels, gentle pilgrim.’

‘Have you been at Adrianople ?’

‘My oppressors were not the Paynim,’ replied the Eremite, ‘but they were enemies far more dire, my own evil passions. Time was when my eye sparkled like thine, gentle pilgrim, and my heart was not as pure.’

‘God is merciful,’ said Iduna, ‘and without His aid, the strongest are but shadows.’

‘Ever think so,’ replied the Eremite, ‘and you will deserve rather His love than His mercy. Thirty long years

have I spent in this solitude, meditating upon the past, and it is a theme yet fertile in instruction. My hours are never heavy, and memory is to me what action is to other men.'

'You have seen much, holy father?'

'And felt more. Yet you will perhaps think the result of all my experience very slight, for I can only say unto thee, trust not in thyself'

'It is a great truth,' remarked Iduna, 'and leads to a higher one'

'Even so,' replied the Eremite. 'We are full of wisdom in old age, as in winter this river is full of water, but the fire of youth, like the summer sun, dries up the stream.'

Iduna did not reply. The Eremite attracted her attention to a patch of cresses on the opposite bank of the stream. 'Every morning I rise only to discover fresh instances of omnipotent benevolence,' he exclaimed. 'Yesterday ye tasted my honey and my fish. To-day I can offer ye a fresh dainty. We will break our fast in this pleasant glen. Rest thou here, gentle youth, and I will summon thy brother to our meal. I fear me much he does not bear so contented a spirit as thyself.'

'He is older, and has seen more,' replied Iduna.

The Eremite shook his head, and leaning on his staff, returned to the cavern. Iduna remained, seated on a mossy rock, listening to the awakening birds, and musing over the fate of Iskander. While she was indulging in this reverie, her name was called. She looked up with a blush and beheld Nicæus.

'How fares my gentle comrade?' inquired the Prince of Athens.

'As well as I hope you are, dear Nicæus. We have been indeed fortunate in finding so kind a host'

'I think I may now congratulate you on your safety,' said the Prince. 'This unfrequented pass will lead us in two days to Epirus, nor do I indeed now fear pursuit.'

'Acts and not words must express in future how much

we owe to you,' said Iduna. 'My joy would be complete if my father only knew of our safety, and if our late companion were here to share it.'

'Fear not for my friend,' replied Nicaeus. 'I have faith in the fortune of Iskander.'

'If any one could succeed under such circumstances, he doubtless is the man,' rejoined Iduna; 'but it was indeed an awful crisis in his fate.'

'Trust me, dear lady, it is wise to banish gloomy thoughts.'

'We can give him only our thoughts,' said Iduna, 'and when we remember how much is dependent on his life, can they be cheerful?'

'Mine must be so, when I am in the presence of Iduna,' replied Nicaeus.

The daughter of Hunniades gathered moss from the rock, and threw it into the stream.

'Dear lady,' said the Prince of Athens, seating himself by her side, and stealing her gentle hand. 'Pardon me, if an irrepressible feeling at this moment impels me to recur to a subject, which, I would fain hope, were not so unpleasing to you, as once unhappily you deemed it. O! Iduna, best and dearest, we are once more together; once more I gaze upon that unrivalled form, and listen to the music of that matchless voice. I sought you, I perhaps violated my pledge, but I sought you in captivity and sorrow. Pardon me, pity me, Iduna! O! Iduna, if possible, love me!'

She turned away her head, she turned away her streaming eyes. 'It is impossible not to love my deliverer,' she replied, in a low and tremulous voice, 'even could he not prefer the many other claims to affection which are possessed by the Prince of Athens. I was not prepared for this renewal of a painful subject, perhaps not under any circumstances, but least of all under those in which we now find ourselves.'

‘Alas!’ exclaimed the Prince, ‘I can no longer control my passion. My life, not my happiness merely, depends upon Iduna becoming mine. Bear with me, beloved, bear with me!’ Were you Nicæus, you too would need forgiveness.’

‘I beseech you, cease!’ exclaimed Iduna, in a firmer voice; and, withdrawing her hand, she suddenly rose. ‘This is neither the time nor place for such conversation. I have not forgotten that, but a few days back, I was a hopeless captive, and that my life and fame are even now in danger. Great mercies have been vouchsafed to me, but still I perhaps need the hourly interposition of heavenly aid. Other than such worldly thoughts should fill my mind, and do. Dear Nicæus,’ she continued, in a soothing tone, ‘you have nobly commenced a most heroic enterprise: fulfil it in like spirit.’

He would have replied; but at this moment the staff of the Eremite sounded among the rocks. Baffled, and dark with rage and passion, the Prince of Athens quitted Iduna, and strolled towards the upper part of the glen, to conceal his anger and disappointment.

‘Eat, gentle youth,’ said the Eremite. ‘Will not thy brother join us? What may be his name?’

‘Nicæus, holy father.’

‘And thine?’

Iduna blushed and hesitated. At length, in her confusion she replied, ‘Iskander.’

‘Nicæus!’ called out the Eremite, ‘Iskander and myself await thee!’

Iduna trembled. She was agreeably surprised when the prince returned with a smiling countenance, and joined in the meal, with many cheerful words.

‘Now, I propose,’ said the Eremite, ‘that yourself and your brother Iskander should tarry with me some days, if, indeed, my simple fare have any temptation’

‘I thank thee, holy father,’ replied Nicæus, ‘but our

affairs are urgent ; nor indeed could I have tarried here at all, had it not been for my young Iskander here, who, as you may easily believe, is little accustomed to his late exertions. But, indeed, towards sunset, we must proceed.'

'Bearing with us,' added Iduna, 'a most grateful recollection of our host.'

'God be with ye, wherever ye may proceed,' replied the Eremite.

'My trust is indeed in Him,' rejoined Iduna.

Chapter XV

And so, two hours before sunset, mounting their refreshed horses, Nicæus and Iduna quitted, with many kind words, the cavern of the Eremite, and took their way along the winding bank of the river. Throughout the moonlit night they travelled, ascending the last and highest chain of mountains, and reaching the summit by dawn. The cheerful light of morning revealed to them the happy plains of a Christian country. With joyful spirits they descended into the fertile land, and stopped at a beautiful Greek village, embowered in orchards and groves of olive-trees.

The Prince of Athens instantly inquired for the Primate, or chief personage of the village, and was conducted to his house ; but its master, he was informed, was without, supervising the commencement of the vintage. Leaving Iduna with the family of the Primate, Nicæus went in search of him. The vineyard was full of groups, busied in the most elegant and joyous of human occupations, gathering, with infinite bursts of merriment, the harvest of the vine. Some mounted on ladders, fixed against the festooning branches, plucked the rich bunches, and threw them below, where girls, singing in chorus, caught them in panniers, or their extended drapery. In the centre of the vineyard, a middle-aged man watched with a calm,

but vigilant eye, the whole proceedings, and occasionally stimulated the indolent, or prompted the inexperienced.

‘Christo!’ said the Prince of Athens, when he had approached him. The Primate turned round, but evidently did not immediately recognise the person who addressed him.

‘I see,’ continued the prince, ‘that my meditated caution was unnecessary. My strange garb is a sufficient disguise.’

‘The Prince Nicæus!’ exclaimed the Primate. ‘He is, indeed, disguised, but will, I am sure, pardon his faithful servant.’

‘Not a word, Christo!’ replied the prince. ‘To be brief, I have crossed the mountains from Roumelia, and have only within this hour recognised the spot whither I have chanced to arrive. I have a companion with me. I would not be known. You comprehend? Affairs of state. I take it for granted that there are none here who will recognise me, after three years’ absence, in this dress.’

‘You may feel secure, my lord,’ replied Christo. ‘If you puzzled me, who have known you since you were no bigger than this bunch of grapes, you will quite confound the rest.’

‘Tis well. I shall stay here a day or two, in order to give them an opportunity to prepare for my reception. In the meantime, it is necessary to send on a courier at once. You must manage all this for me, Christo. How are your daughters?’

‘So, so, please your highness,’ replied Christo. ‘A man with seven daughters has got trouble for every day in the week.’

‘But not when they are so pretty as yours are!’

‘Poh! poh! handsome is that handsome does, and as for Alexina, she wants to be married.’

‘Very natural. Let her marry, by all means.’

‘But Helena wants to do the same.’

‘More natural still, for, if possible, she is prettier. For my part, I could marry them both.’

‘Ay, ay! that is all very well; but handsome is that handsome does. I have no objection to Alexina marrying, and even Helena; but then there is Lais’

‘Hah! hah! hah!’ exclaimed the prince. ‘I see, my dear Christo, that my foster sisters give you a very proper portion of trouble. However, I must be off to my travelling companion. Come in as soon as you can, my dear fellow, and we will settle everything. A good vintage to you, and only as much mischief as necessary.’ So saying, the prince tipped away.

‘Well! who would have thought of seeing him here!’ exclaimed the worthy Primate. ‘The same gay dog as ever! What can he have been doing in Roumelia? Affairs of state, indeed! I’ll wager my new Epiphany scarf, that, whatever the affairs are, there is a pretty girl in the case.’

Chapter XVI

The fair Iduna, after all her perils and sufferings, was at length sheltered in safety under a kind and domestic roof. Alexina, and Helena, and Lais, and all the other sisters emulated each other in the attentions which they lavished upon the two brothers, but especially the youngest. Their kindness, indeed, was only equalled by their ceaseless curiosity, and had they ever waited for the answers of Iduna to their questions, the daughter of Hunniades might, perhaps, have been somewhat puzzled to reconcile her responses with probability. Helena answered the questions of Alexina: Lais anticipated even Helena. All that Iduna had to do was to smile and be silent, and it was universally agreed that Iskander was singularly shy as well as excessively handsome. In the meantime, when Nicæus met Iduna in the evening of the second day of their visit, he informed her that he had been so fortunate as to resume an acquaintance with an old companion in arms in the

person of a neighbouring noble, who had invited them to rest at his castle at the end of their next day's journey. He told her likewise that he had despatched a courier to Croia to enquire after Iskander, who, he expected, in the course of a very few days, would bring them intelligence to guide their future movements, and decide whether they should at once proceed to the capital of Epirus, or advance into Bulgaria, in case Hunniades was still in the field. On the morrow, therefore, they proceeded on their journey. Nicæus had procured a litter for Iduna, for which her delicate health was an excuse to Alexina and her sisters, and they were attended by a small body of well-armed cavalry, for, according to the accounts which Nicæus had received, the country was still disturbed. They departed at break of day, Nicæus riding by the side of the litter, and occasionally making anxious inquiries after the well-being of his fair charge. An hour after noon they rested at a well, surrounded by olive-trees, until the extreme heat was somewhat allayed; and then remounting, proceeded in the direction of an undulating ridge of green hills, that partially intersected the wide plain. Towards sunset the Prince of Athens withdrew the curtains of the litter, and called the attention of Iduna to a very fair castle, rising on a fertile eminence, and sparkling in the quivering beams of dying light.

'I fear,' said Nicæus, 'that my friend Justinian will scarcely have returned, but we are old comrades, and he desired me to act as his seneschal. For your sake I am sorry, Iduna, for I feel convinced that he would please you.'

'It is, indeed, a fair castle,' replied Iduna, 'and none but a true knight deserves such a noble residence.'

While she spoke the commander of the escort sounded his bugle, and they commenced the ascent of the steep, a winding road, cut through a thick wood of evergreen shrubs. The gradual and easy ascent soon brought them

to a portal flanked with towers, which admitted them into the outworks of the fortification. Here they found several soldiers on guard, and the commander again sounding his bugle, the gates of the castle opened, and the seneschal, attended by a suite of many domestics, advanced and welcomed Nicæus and Iduna. The Prince of Athens dismounting, assisted his fair companion from the litter, and leading her by the hand, and preceded by the seneschal, entered the castle.

They passed through a magnificent hall, hung with choice armour, and ascending a staircase of Pentelic marble, were ushered into a suite of lofty chambers, lined with Oriental tapestry, and furnished with many costly couches and cabinets. While they admired a spectacle so different to anything they had recently beheld or experienced, the seneschal, followed by a number of slaves in splendid attire, advanced and offered them rare and choice refreshments, coffee and confectionery, sherbets and spiced wines. When they had partaken of this elegant cheer, Nicæus intimated to the seneschal that the Lady Iduna might probably wish to retire, and instantly a discreet matron, followed by six beautiful girls, each bearing a fragrant torch of cinnamon and roses, advanced and offered to conduct the Lady Iduna to her apartments.

The matron and her company of maidens conducted the daughter of Hunniades down a long gallery, which led to a suite of the prettiest chambers in the world. The first was an antechamber, painted like a bower, but filled with the music of living birds ; the second, which was much larger, was entirely covered with Venetian mirrors, and resting on a bright Persian carpet were many couches of crimson velvet, covered with a variety of sumptuous dresses, the third room was a bath, made in the semblance of a gigantic shell. Its roof was of transparent alabaster, glowing with shadowy light.

Chapter XVII

A flourish of trumpets announced the return of the Lady Iduna ; and the Prince of Athens, magnificently attired, came forward with a smile, and led her, with a compliment on her resuming the dress of her sex, if not of her country, to the banquet. Iduna was not uninfluenced by that excitement which is insensibly produced by a sudden change of scene and circumstances, and especially by an unexpected transition from hardship, peril and suffering, to luxury, security and enjoyment. Their spirits were elevated and gay ; she smiled upon Nicæus with a cheerful sympathy. They feasted, they listened to sweet music, they talked over their late adventures, and, animated by their own enjoyment, they became more sanguine as to the fate of Iskander.

‘ In two or three days we shall know more.’ said Nicæus. ‘ In the meantime, rest is absolutely necessary to you. It is only now that you will begin to be sensible of the exertion you have made. If Iskander be at Croia, he has already informed your father of your escape ; if he have not arrived, I have arranged that a courier shall be despatched to Hunniades from that city. Do not be anxious. Try to be happy. I am myself sanguine that you will find all well. Come, pledge me your father’s health, fair lady, in this goblet of Tenedos !’

‘ How know I that at this moment he may not be at the point of death,’ replied Iduna. ‘ When I am absent from those I love, I dream only of their unhappiness.’

‘ At this moment also,’ rejoined Nicæus, ‘ he dreams perhaps of your imprisonment among barbarians. Yet how mistaken ! Let that consideration support you. Come ! here is to the Eremite ’

‘ As willing, if not as sumptuous, a host as our present

one,' said Iduna ; ' and when, by-the-bye, do you think that your friend, the Lord Justinian, will arrive ? '

' Oh ! never mind him,' said Nicæus. ' He would have arrived to-morrow, but the great news which I gave him has probably changed his plans. I told him of the approaching invasion, and he has perhaps found it necessary to visit the neighbouring chieftains, or even to go on to Croia.'

' Well-a-day ! ' exclaimed Iduna, ' I would we were in my father's camp ! '

' We shall soon be there, dear lady,' replied the Prince. ' Come, worthy seneschal,' he added, turning to that functionary, ' drink to this noble lady's happy meeting with her friends.'

Chapter XVIII

Three or four days passed away at the castle of Justinian, in which Nicæus used his utmost exertions to divert the anxiety of Iduna. One day was spent in examining the castle, on another he amused her with a hawking party, on a third he carried her to the neighbouring ruins of a temple, and read his favourite Æschylus to her amid its lone and elegant columns. It was impossible for any one to be more amiable and entertaining, and Iduna could not resist recognising his many virtues and accomplishments. The courier had not yet returned from Croia, which Nicæus accounted for by many satisfactory reasons. The suspense, however, at length became so painful to Iduna, that she proposed to the Prince of Athens that they should, without further delay, proceed to that city. As usual, Nicæus was not wanting in many plausible arguments in favour of their remaining at the castle, but Iduna was resolute.

' Indeed, dear Nicæus,' she said, ' my anxiety to see my father, or hear from him, is so great, that there is scarcely any danger which I would not encounter to gratify my wish. I feel that I have already taxed your endurance too much.

But we are no longer in a hostile land, and guards and guides are to be engaged. Let me then depart alone !’

‘Iduna !’ exclaimed Nicæus, reproachfully. ‘Alas ! Iduna, you are cruel, but I did not expect this !’

‘Dear Nicæus !’ she answered, ‘you always misinterpret me ! It would infinitely delight me to be restored to Hunniades by yourself, but these are no common times, and you are no common person. You forget that there is one that has greater claims upon you even than a forlorn maiden, your country. And whether Iskander be at Croia or not, Greece requires the presence and exertions of the Prince of Athens.’

‘I have no country,’ replied Nicæus, mournfully, ‘and no object for which to exert myself’

‘Nicæus ! Is this the poetic patriot who was yesterday envying Themistocles ?’

‘Alas ! Iduna, yesterday you were my muse. I do not wonder you are wearied of this castle,’ continued the prince in a melancholy tone. ‘This spot contains nothing to interest you, but for me, it holds all that is dear, and, O ! gentle maiden, one smile from you, one smile of inspiration, and I would not envy Themistocles, and might perhaps rival him’

They were walking together in the hall of the castle ; Iduna stepped aside and affected to examine a curious buckler, Nicæus followed her, and placing his arm gently in hers, led her away

‘Dearest Iduna,’ he said, ‘pardon me, but men struggle for their fate Mine is in your power. It is a contest between misery and happiness, glory and perhaps infamy. Do not then wonder that I will not yield my chance of the brighter fortune without an effort. Once more I appeal to your pity, if not to your love Were Iduna mine, were she to hold out but the possibility of her being mine, there is no career, solemnly I avow what solemnly I feel, there is no career of which I could not be capable, and no condition to

which I would not willingly subscribe. But this certainty, or this contingency, I must have : I cannot exist without the alternative. And now, upon my knees, I implore her to grant it to me !’

‘ Nicæus,’ said Iduna, ‘ this continued recurrence to a forbidden subject is most ungenerous.’

‘ Alas ! Iduna, my life depends upon a word, which you will not speak, and you talk of generosity. No ! Iduna, it is not I that am ungenerous.’

‘ Let me say then unreasonable, Prince Nicæus.’

‘ Say what you like, Iduna, provided that you say that you are mine.’

‘ Pardon me, sir, I am free.’

‘ Free ! You have ever underrated me, Iduna. To whom do you owe this boasted freedom ?’

‘ This is not the first time,’ remarked Iduna, ‘ that you have reminded me of an obligation, the memory of which is indelibly impressed upon my heart, and for which even the present conversation cannot make me feel less grateful. I can never forget that I owe all that is dear to yourself and your companion.’

‘ My companion !’ replied the Prince of Athens, pale and passionate. ‘ My companion ! Am I ever to be reminded of my companion ?’

‘ Nicæus !’ said Iduna ; ‘ if you forget what is due to me, at least endeavour to remember what is due to yourself !’

‘ Beautiful being !’ said the prince, advancing and passionately seizing her hand ; ‘ pardon me ! pardon me ! I am not master of my reason ! I am nothing, I am nothing while Iduna hesitates !’

‘ She does not hesitate, Nicæus. I desire, I require, that this conversation shall cease ; shall never, never be renewed.’

‘ And I tell thee, haughty woman,’ said the Prince of Athens, grinding his teeth, and speaking with violent action,

‘that I will no longer be despised with impunity. Iduna is mine, or is no one else’s.’

‘Is it possible?’ exclaimed the daughter of Hunniades. ‘Is it, indeed, come to this? But why am I surprised? I have long known Nicæus. I quit this castle instantly.’

‘You are a prisoner,’ replied the prince calmly, and leaning with folded arms against the wall.

‘A prisoner!’ exclaimed Iduna, a little alarmed. ‘A prisoner! I defy you, sir. You are only a guest like myself. I will appeal to the seneschal in the absence of his lord. He will never permit the honour of his master’s flag to be violated by the irrational caprice of a passionate boy.’

‘What lord?’ inquired Nicæus.

‘Your friend, the Lord Justinian,’ answered Iduna. ‘He could little anticipate such an abuse of his hospitality.’

‘My friend, the Lord Justinian!’ replied Nicæus, with a malignant smile. ‘I am surprised that a personage of the Lady Iduna’s dear discrimination should so easily be deceived by “a passionate boy!” Is it possible that you could have supposed for a moment that there was any other lord of this castle save your devoted slave?’

‘What!’ exclaimed Iduna, really frightened.

‘I have, indeed, the honour of finding the Lady Iduna my guest,’ continued Nicæus, in a tone of bitter raillery. ‘This castle of Kallista, the fairest in all Epirus, I inherit from my mother. Of late I have seldom visited it, but, indeed, it will become a favourite residence of mine, if it be, as I anticipate, the scene of my nuptial ceremony.’

Iduna looked around her with astonishment, then threw herself upon a couch, and burst into tears. The Prince of Athens walked up and down the hall with an air of determined coolness.

‘Perfidious!’ exclaimed Iduna between her sobs.

‘Lady Iduna,’ said the prince, and he seated himself by her side, ‘I will not attempt to palliate a deception which

your charms could alone inspire and can alone justify. Hear me, Lady Iduna, hear me with calmness. I love you ; I love you with a passion which has been as constant as it is strong. My birth, my rank, my fortunes, do not disqualify me for an union with the daughter of the great Hunniades. If my personal claims may sink in comparison with her surpassing excellence, I am yet to learn that any other prince in Christendom can urge a more effective plea. I am young ; the ladies of the court have called me handsome ; by your great father's side I have broken some lances in your honour , and even Iduna once confessed she thought me clever. Come, come, be merciful ! Let my beautiful Athens receive a fitting mistress ! A holy father is in readiness, dear maiden Come now, one smile ! In a few days we shall reach your father's camp, and then we will kneel, as I do now, and beg a blessing on our happy union.' As he spoke, he dropped upon his knee, and stealing her hand, looked into her face. It was sorrowful and gloomy.

'It is in vain, Nicæus,' said Iduna, 'to appeal to your generosity ; it is useless to talk of the past ; it is idle to reproach you for the present. I am a woman, alone and persecuted, where I could least anticipate persecution. Nicæus, I never can be yours , and now I deliver myself to the mercy of Almighty God '

'Tis well,' said Nicæus. 'From the tower of the castle you may behold the waves of the Ionian Sea. You will remain here a close prisoner, until one of my galleys arrives from Piræus to bear us to Italy. Mine you must be, Iduna. It remains for you to decide under what circumstances. Continue in your obstinacy, and you may bid farewell for ever to your country and to your father. Be reasonable, and a destiny awaits you, which offers everything that has hitherto been considered the source or cause of happiness.' Thus speaking, the prince retired, leaving the Lady Iduna to her own unhappy thoughts.

Chapter XIX

The Lady Iduna was at first inclined to view the conduct of the Prince of Athens, as one of those passionate and passing ebullitions in which her long acquaintance with him had taught her he was accustomed to indulge. But when on retiring soon after to her apartments, she was informed by her attendant matron that she must in future consider herself a prisoner, and not venture again to quit them without permission, she began to tremble at the possible violence of an ill-regulated mind. She endeavoured to interest her attendant in her behalf; but the matron was too well schooled to evince any feeling or express any opinion on the subject; and indeed, at length, fairly informed Iduna that she was commanded to confine her conversation to the duties of her office.

The Lady Iduna was very unhappy. She thought of her father, she thought of Iskander. The past seemed a dream; she was often tempted to believe that she was still, and had ever been, a prisoner in the Serail of Adrianople; and that all the late wonderful incidents of her life were but the shifting scenes of some wild slumber. And then some slight incident, the sound of a bell, or the sight of some holy emblem, assured her she was in a Christian land, and convinced her of the strange truth that she was indeed in captivity, and a prisoner, above all others, to the fond companion of her youth. Her indignation at the conduct of Nicæus roused her courage; she resolved to make an effort to escape. Her rooms were only lighted from above; she determined to steal forth at night into the gallery; the door was secured. She hastened back to her chamber in fear and sorrow, and wept.

Twice in the course of the day the stern and silent matron visited Iduna with her food; and as she retired, secured the door. This was the only individual that the

imprisoned lady ever beheld. And thus heavily rolled on upwards of a week. On the eve of the ninth day, Iduna was surprised by the matron presenting her a letter as she quitted the chamber for the night. Iduna seized it with a feeling of curiosity not unmixed with pleasure. It was the only incident that had occurred during her captivity. She recognised the handwriting of Nicæus, and threw it down with vexation at her silliness in supposing, for a moment, that the matron could have been the emissary of any other person.

Yet the letter must be read, and at length she opened it. It informed her that a ship had arrived from Athens at the coast, and that to-morrow she must depart for Italy. It told her, also, that the Turks, under Mahomed, had invaded Albania, and that the Hungarians, under the command of her father, had come to support the Cross. It said nothing of Iskander. But it reminded her that little more than the same time that would carry her to the coast to embark for a foreign land, would, were she wise, alike enable Nicæus to place her in her father's arms, and allow him to join in the great struggle for his country and his creed. The letter was written with firmness, but tenderly. It left, however, on the mind of Iduna an impression of the desperate resolution of the writer.

Now it so happened, that as this unhappy lady jumped from her couch, and paced the room in the perturbation of her mind, the wind of her drapery extinguished her lamp. As her attendant, or visitor, had paid her last visit for the day, there seemed little chance of its being again illumined. The miserable are always more unhappy in the dark. Light is the greatest of comforters. And so this little misfortune seemed to the forlorn Iduna almost overwhelming. And as she attempted to look around, and wrung her hands in very woe, her attention was attracted by a brilliant streak of light upon the wall, which greatly surprised her. She groped her way in its direction, and slowly stretching forth

her hand, observed that it made its way through a chink in the frame of one of the great mirrors which were inlaid in the wall. And as she pressed the frame, she felt to her surprise that it sprang forward. Had she not been very cautious the advancing mirror would have struck her with great force, but she had presence of mind to withdraw her hand very gradually, repressing the swiftness of the spring. The aperture occasioned by the opening of the mirror consisted of a recess, formed by a closed-up window. An old wooden shutter, or blind, in so ruinous a state, that the light freely made its way, was the only barrier against the elements. Iduna, seizing the handle which remained, at once drew it open with little difficulty.

The captive gazed with gladdened feelings upon the free and beautiful scene. Beneath her rose the rich and aromatic shrubs tinged with the soft and silver light of eve. Before her extended the wide and fertile champaign, skirted by the dark and undulating mountains. In the clear sky, glittering and sharp, sparkled the first crescent of the new moon, an auspicious omen to the Moslem invaders.

Iduna gazed with joy upon the landscape, and then hastily descending from the recess, she placed her hands to her eyes, so long unaccustomed to the light. Perhaps, too, she indulged in momentary meditation. For suddenly seizing a number of shawls which were lying on one of the couches, she knotted them together, and then, striving with all her force, she placed the heaviest couch on one end of the costly cord, and then throwing the other out of the window, and entrusting herself to the merciful care of the holy Virgin, the brave daughter of Hunniades successfully dropped down into the garden below.

She stopped to breathe, and to revel in her emancipated existence. It was a bold enterprise gallantly achieved. But the danger had now only commenced. She found that she had alighted at the back of the castle. She stole along upon tip-toe, timid as a fawn. She remembered a small

wicket-gate that led into the open country. She arrived at the gate. It was of course guarded. The single sentinel was kneeling before an image of St. George, beside him was an empty drinking-cup and an exhausted wine-skin.

‘Holy Saint!’ exclaimed the pious sentinel, ‘preserve us from all Turkish infidels!’ Iduna stole behind him. ‘Shall men who drink no wine conquer true Christians!’ continued the sentinel. Iduna placed her hand upon the lock. ‘We thank thee for our good vintage,’ said the sentinel. Iduna opened the gate with the noiseless touch which a feminine finger can alone command. ‘And for the rise of the Lord Iskander!’ added the sentinel. Iduna escaped!

Now she indeed was free. Swiftly she ran over the wide plain. She hoped to reach some town or village before her escape could be discovered, and she hurried on for three hours without resting. She came to a beautiful grove of olive-trees that spread in extensive ramifications about the plain. And through this beautiful grove of olive-trees her path seemed to lead. So she entered and advanced. And when she had journeyed for about a mile, she came to an open and verdant piece of ground, which was, as it were, the heart of the grove. In its centre rose a fair and antique structure of white marble, shrouding from the noonday sun the perennial flow of a famous fountain. It was near midnight. Iduna was wearied, and she sat down upon the steps of the fountain for rest. And while she was musing over all the strange adventures of her life, she heard a rustling in the wood, and being alarmed, she rose and hid herself behind a tree.

And while she stood there, with palpitating heart, the figure of a man advanced to the fountain from an opposite direction of the grove. He went up the steps, and looked down upon the spring as if he were about to drink, but instead of doing that, he drew his scimitar, and plunged it into the water, and called out with a loud voice the name

of 'Iskander !' three times. Whereupon Iduna, actuated by an irresistible impulse, came forward from her hiding-place, but instantly gave a loud shriek when she beheld the Prince Mahomed !

'O ! night of glory !' exclaimed the prince, advancing. 'Do I indeed behold the fair Iduna ! This is truly magic !'

'Away ! away !' exclaimed the distracted Iduna, as she endeavoured to fly from him.

'He has kept his word, that cunning leech, better than I expected,' said Mahomed, seizing her.

'As well as you deserve, ravisher !' exclaimed a majestic voice. A tall figure rushed forward from the wood, and dashed back the Turk.

'I am here to complete my contract, Prince Mahomed,' said the stranger, drawing his sword.

'Iskander !' exclaimed the prince.

'We have met before, prince. Let us so act now that we may meet for the last time.'

'Infamous, infernal traitor,' exclaimed Mahomed, 'dost thou, indeed, imagine that I will sully my imperial blade with the blood of my runaway slave ! No ! I came here to secure thy punishment, but I cannot condescend to become thy punisher. Advance, guards, and seize him ! Seize them both !'

Iduna flew to Iskander, who caught her in one arm while he waved his scimitar with the other. The guards of Mahomed poured forth from the side of the grove whence the prince had issued.

'And dost thou indeed think, Mahomed,' said Iskander, 'that I have been educated in the Seraglio to be duped by Moslem craft. I offer thee single combat if thou desirest it, but combat as we may, the struggle shall be equal.' He whistled, and instantly a body of Hungarians, headed by Hunniades himself, advanced from the side of the grove whence Iskander had issued.

'Come on, then,' said Mahomed, 'each to his man.'

Their swords clashed, but the principal attendants of the son of Amurath, deeming the affair under the present circumstances assumed the character of a mere rash adventure, bore away the Turkish prince.

‘To-morrow, then, this fray shall be decided on the plains of Kallista,’ said Mahomed.

‘Epirus is prepared,’ replied Iskander.

The Turks withdrew. Iskander bore the senseless form of Iduna to her father. Hunniades embraced his long-lost child. They sprinkled her face with water from the fountain. She revived.

‘Where is Nicæus?’ inquired Iskander; ‘and how came you again, dear lady, in the power of Mahomed?’

‘Alas! noble sir, my twice deliverer,’ answered Iduna, ‘I have, indeed, again been doomed to captivity, but my persecutor, I blush to say, was this time a Christian prince.’

‘Holy Virgin!’ exclaimed Iskander. ‘Who can this villain be?’

‘The villain, Lord Iskander, is your friend; and your pupil, dear father.’

‘Nicæus of Athens!’ exclaimed Hunniades.

Iskander was silent and melancholy.

Thereupon the Lady Iduna recounted to her father and Iskander, sitting between them on the margin of the fount, all that had occurred to her, since herself and Nicæus parted with Iskander; nor did she omit to relate to Hunniades all the devotion of Iskander, respecting which, like a truly brave man, he had himself been silent. The great Hunniades scarcely knew which rather to do, to lavish his affection on his beloved child, or his gratitude upon Iskander. Thus they went on conversing for some time, Iskander placing his own cloak around Iduna, and almost unconsciously winding his arm around her unresisting form.

Just as they were prepared to return to the Christian camp, a great noise was heard in the grove, and presently

in the direction whence Iduna had arrived, there came a band of men, bearing torches and examining the grove in all directions in great agitation. Iskander and Hunniades stood upon their guard, but soon perceived they were Greeks. Their leader, seeing a group near the fountain, advanced to make inquiries respecting the object of his search, but when he indeed recognised the persons who formed the group, the torch fell from his grasp, and he turned away his head and hid his face in his hands.

Iduna clung to her father; Iskander stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground, but Hunniades stern and terrible, disembarassing himself of the grasp of his daughter, advanced and laid his hand upon the stranger.

‘Young man,’ said the noble father, ‘were it contrition instead of shame that inspired this attitude, it might be better. I have often warned you of the fatal consequences of a reckless indulgence of the passions. More than once I have predicted to you, that, however great might be your confidence in your ingenuity and your resources, the hour would arrive when such a career would place you in a position as despicable as it was shameful. That hour has arrived, and that position is now filled by the Prince of Athens. You stand before the three individuals in this world whom you have most injured, and whom you were most bound to love and to protect. Here is a friend, who has hazarded his prosperity and his existence for your life and your happiness. And you have made him a mere pander to your lusts, and then deserted him in his greatest necessities. This maiden was the companion of your youth, and entitled to your kindest offices. You have treated her infinitely worse than her Turkish captor. And for myself, sir, your father was my dearest friend. I endeavoured to repay his friendship by supplying his place to his orphan child. How I discharged my duty it becomes not me to say: how you have discharged yours, this lady here, my daughter, your late prisoner, sir, can best prove.’

‘ Oh ! spare me, spare me, sir,’ said the Prince of Athens, turning and falling upon his knee. ‘ I am most wretched. Every word cuts to my very core. Just Providence has baffled all my arts, and I am grateful. Whether this lady can, indeed, forgive me, I hardly dare to think, or even hope. And yet forgiveness is a heavenly boon. Perhaps the memory of old days may melt her. As for yourself, sir but I’ll not speak, I cannot. Noble Iskander, if I mistake not, you may whisper words in that fair ear, less grating than my own. May you be happy ! I will not profane your prospects with my vows. And yet I’ll say farewell ! ’

The Prince of Athens turned away with an air of complete wretchedness, and slowly withdrew. Iskander followed him.

‘ Nicæus,’ said Iskander ; but the prince entered the grove, and did not turn round.

‘ Dear Nicæus,’ said Iskander. The prince hesitated.

‘ Let us not part thus,’ said Iskander. ‘ Iduna is most unhappy. She bade me tell you she had forgotten all.’

‘ God bless her, and God bless you, too ! ’ replied Nicæus. ‘ I pray you let me go.’

‘ Nay ! dear Nicæus, are we not friends ? ’

‘ The best and truest, Iskander. I will to the camp, and meet you in your tent ere morning break. At present, I would be alone.’

‘ Dear Nicæus, one word You have said upon one point, what I could well wish unsaid, and dared to prophesy what may never happen. I am not made for such supreme felicity. Epirus is my mistress, my Nicæus. As there is a living God, my friend, most solemnly I vow, I have had no thoughts in this affair, but for your honour.’

‘ I know it, my dear friend, I know it,’ replied Nicæus. ‘ I keenly feel your admirable worth. Say no more, say no more. She is a fit wife for a hero, and you *are* one ! ’

Chapter XX

After the battle of the bridge, Iskander had hurried to Croia without delay. In his progress, he had made many fruitless inquiries after Iduna and Nicæus, but he consoled himself from the unsatisfactory answers he received by the opinion that they had taken a different course, and the conviction that all must now be safe. The messenger from Croia that informed Hunniades of the escape of his daughter, also solicited his aid in favour of Epirus against the impending invasion of the Turks, and stimulated by personal gratitude as well as by public duty, Hunniades answered the solicitation in person at the head of twenty thousand lances.

Hunniades and Iskander had mutually flattered themselves when apart, that each would be able to quell the anxiety of the other on the subject of Iduna. The leader of Epirus flattered himself that his late companions had proceeded at once to Transylvania, and the Varvode himself had indulged in the delightful hope that the first person he should embrace at Croia would be his long-lost child. When, therefore, they met, and were mutually incapable of imparting any information on the subject to each other, they were filled with astonishment and disquietude. Events, however, gave them little opportunity to indulge in anxiety or grief. On the day that Hunniades and his lances arrived at Croia, the invading army of the Turks under the Prince Mahomed crossed the mountains, and soon after pitched their camp on the fertile plain of Kallista.

As Iskander, by the aid of Hunniades and the neighbouring princes, and the patriotic exertions of his countrymen, was at this moment at the head of a force which the Turkish prince could not have anticipated, he resolved to march at once to meet the Ottomans, and decide the fate of Greece by a pitched battle.

The night before the arrival of Iduna at the famous fountain, the Christian army had taken up its position within a few miles of the Turks. The turbaned warriors wished to delay the engagement until the new moon, the eve of which was at hand. And it happened on that said eve that Iskander, calling to mind his contract with the Turkish prince made in the gardens of the Seraglio at Adrianople, and believing from the superstitious character of Mahomed that he would not fail to be at the appointed spot, resolved, as we have seen, to repair to the fountain of Kallista.

And now from that fountain the hero returned, bearing with him a prize scarcely less precious than the freedom of his country, for which he was to combat on the morrow's morn

Ere the dawn had broken, the Christian power was in motion. Iskander commanded the centre, Hunniades the right wing. The left was entrusted at his urgent request to the Prince of Athens. A mist that hung about the plain allowed Nicæus to charge the right wing of the Turks almost unperceived. He charged with irresistible fury, and soon disordered the ranks of the Moslem. Mahomed with the reserve hastened to their aid. A mighty multitude of Janissaries, shouting the name of Allah and his Prophet, penetrated the Christian centre. Hunniades endeavoured to attack them on their flank, but was himself charged by the Turkish cavalry. The battle was now general, and raged with terrible fury. Iskander had secreted in his centre a new and powerful battery of cannon, presented to him by the Pope, and which had just arrived from Venice. This battery played upon the Janissaries with destruction. He himself mowed them down with his irresistible scimitar. Infinite was the slaughter! awful the uproar! But of all the Christian knights, this day, no one performed such mighty feats of arms as the Prince of Athens. With a reckless desperation he dashed about the field, and every-

thing seemed to yield to his inspired impulse. His example animated his men with such a degree of enthusiasm, that the division to which he was opposed, although encouraged by the presence of Mahomed himself, could no longer withstand the desperate courage of the Christians, and fled in all directions. Then, rushing to the aid of Iskander, Nicæus, at the head of a body of picked men, dashed upon the rear of the Janissaries, and nearly surrounded them. Hunniades instantly made a fresh charge upon the left wing of the Turks. A panic fell upon the Moslems, who were little prepared for such a demonstration of strength on the part of their adversaries. In a few minutes their order seemed generally broken, and their leaders in vain endeavoured to rally them. Waving his bloody scimitar, and bounding on his black charger, Iskander called upon his men to secure the triumph of the Cross and the freedom of Epirus. Pursuit was now general.

Chapter XXI

The Turks were massacred by thousands. Mahomed, when he found that all was lost, fled to the mountains, with a train of guards and eunuchs, and left the care of his dispersed host to his Pachas. The hills were covered with the fugitives and their pursuers. Some fled also to the sea-shore, where the Turkish fleet was at anchor. The plain was strewn with corpses and arms, and tents and standards. The sun was now high in the heavens. The mist had cleared away; but occasional clouds of smoke still sailed about.

A solitary Christian knight entered a winding pass in the green hills, apart from the scene of strife. The slow and trembling step of his wearied steed would have ill qualified him to join in the triumphant pursuit, even had he himself been physically enabled; but the Christian knight was

covered with gore, unhappily not alone that of his enemies. He was, indeed, streaming with desperate wounds, and scarcely could his fainting form retain its tottering seat.

The winding pass, which for some singular reason he now pursued in solitude, instead of returning to the busy camp for aid and assistance, conducted the knight to a small green valley, covered with sweet herbs, and entirely surrounded by hanging woods. In the centre rose the ruins of a Doric fane; three or four columns, grey and majestic. All was still and silent, save that in the clear blue sky an eagle flew, high in the air, but whirling round the temple.

The knight reached the ruins of the Doric fane, and with difficulty dismounting from his charger, fell upon the soft and flowery turf, and for some moments was motionless. His horse stole a few yards away, and though scarcely less injured than its rider, instantly commenced cropping the inviting pasture.

At length the Christian knight slowly raised his head, and leaning on his arm, sighed deeply. His face was very pale; but as he looked up, and perceived the eagle in the heaven, a smile played upon his pallid cheek, and his beautiful eye gleamed with a sudden flash of light.

‘Glorious bird!’ murmured the Christian warrior, ‘once I deemed that my career might resemble thine! ’Tis over now; and Greece, for which I would have done so much, will soon forget my immemorial name. I have stolen here to die in silence and in beauty. This blue air, and these green woods, and these lone columns, which oft to me have been a consolation, breathing of the poetic past, and of the days wherein I fain had lived, I have escaped from the fell field of carnage to die among them. Farewell my country! Farewell to one more beautiful than Greece, farewell, Iduna!’

These were the last words of Nicæus, Prince of Athens.

Chapter XXII

While the unhappy lover of the daughter of Hunniades breathed his last words to the solitary elements, his more fortunate friend received, in the centre of his scene of triumph, the glorious congratulations of his emancipated country. The discomfiture of the Turks was complete, and this overthrow, coupled with their recent defeat in Bulgaria, secured Christendom from their assaults during the remainder of the reign of Amurath the Second. Surrounded by his princely allies, and the chieftains of Epirus, the victorious standards of Christendom, and the triumphant trophies of the Moslem, Iskander received from the great Hunniades the hand of his beautiful daughter. 'Thanks to these brave warriors,' said the hero, 'I can now offer to your daughter a safe, an honourable, and a Christian home.'

'It is to thee, great sir, that Epirus owes its security,' said an ancient chieftain, addressing Iskander, 'its national existence, and its holy religion. All that we have to do now is to preserve them; nor, indeed, do I see that we can more effectually obtain these great objects than by entreating thee to mount the redeemed throne of thy ancestors. Therefore I say, GOD SAVE ISKANDER, KING OF EPIRUS!'

And all the people shouted and said, 'GOD SAVE THE KING! GOD SAVE ISKANDER, KING OF EPIRUS!'



THE CARRIER-PIGEON

THE CARRIER-PIGEON

I

ALTHOUGH the deepest shades of twilight had descended upon the broad bosom of the valley, and the river might almost be recognised only by its rushing sound, the walls and battlements of the castle of Charolois, situate on one of the loftiest heights, still blazed in the reflected radiance of the setting sun, and cast, as it were, a glance of triumph at the opposing castle of Branchimont, that rose on the western side of the valley, with its lofty turrets and its massy keep black and sharply defined against the resplendent heaven.

Deadly was the hereditary feud between the powerful lords of these high places the Counts of Charolois and the Barons of Branchimont; but the hostility which had been maintained for ages never perhaps raged with more virulence than at this moment; since the only male heir of the house of Charolois had been slain in a tournament by the late Baron of Branchimont, and the distracted father had avenged his irreparable loss in the life-blood of the involuntary murderer of his son.

Yet the pilgrim, who at this serene hour might rest upon his staff and gaze on the surrounding scene, would hardly deem that the darkest passions of our nature

had selected this fair and silent spot for the theatre of their havoc.

The sun set; the evening star, quivering and bright, rose over the dark towers of Branchimont, from the opposite bank a musical bell summoned the devout vassals of Charolois to a beautiful shrine, wherein was deposited the heart of their late young lord, and which his father had raised on a small and richly wooded promontory, distant about a mile from his stern hold

At the first chime on this lovely eve came forth a lovelier maiden from the postern of Charolois the Lady Imogene, the only remaining child of the bereaved count, attended by her page, bearing her book of prayers. She took her way along the undulating heights until she reached the sanctuary. The altar was illumined; several groups were already kneeling, faces of fidelity well known to their adored lady; but as she entered, a palmer, with his broad hat drawn over his face, and closely muffled up in his eloak, dipped his hand at the same time with hers in the fount of holy water placed at the entrance of the shrine, and pressed the beautiful fingers of the Lady Imogene. A blush, unperceived by the kneeling votaries, rose to her cheek, but apparently such was her self-control, or such her deep respect for the hallowed spot, that she exhibited no other symptom of emotion, and, walking to the high altar, was soon buried in her devotions.

The mass was celebrated the vassals rose and retired. According to her custom, the Lady Imogene yet remained, and knelt before the tomb of her brother. A low whisper, occasionally sounding, assured her that some one was at the confessional, and soon the palmer, who was now shrived, knelt at her side. 'Lothair!' muttered the lady, apparently at her prayers, 'beloved Lothair, thou art too bold!'

'Oh, Imogene! for thee what would I not venture!' was the hushed reply.

‘For the sake of all our hopes, wild though they be, I counsel caution.’

‘Fear nought. The priest, flattered by my confession, is fairly duped. Let me employ this golden moment to urge what I have before entreated. Your father, Imogene, can never be appeased. Fly, then, my beloved! oh, fly!’

‘Oh, my Lothair! it never can be. Alas! whither can we fly?’

‘Sweet love! I pray thee listen: to Italy. At the court of my cousin, the Duke of Milan, we shall be safe and happy. What care I for Branchimont, and all its fortunes? And for that, my vassals are no traitors. If ever the bright hour arrive when we may return in joy, trust me, sweet love, my flag will still wave on my father’s walls.’

‘Oh, Lothair! why did we meet? Why, meeting, did we not hate each other like our fated race? My heart is distracted. Can this misery be love? Yet I adore thee’

‘Lady!’ said the page advancing, ‘the priest approaches.’

The Lady Imogene rose, and crossed herself before the altar.

‘To-morrow, at this hour,’ whispered Lothair.

The Lady Imogene nodded assent, and, leaning on her page, quitted the shrine.

II

‘Dearest Lady,’ said the young page, as they returned to the castle, ‘my heart misgives me. As we quitted the shrine, I observed Rufus, the huntsman, sink into the adjoining wood.’

‘Hah! He is my father’s most devoted instrument: nor is there any bidding which he would hesitate to execute
‘a most ruthless knave!’

‘ And can see like a cat in the dark, too,’ observed young Theodore

‘ I never loved that man, even in my cradle,’ said the Lady Imogene ; ‘ though he can fawn, too. Did he indeed avoid us ? ’

‘ Indeed I thought so, Madam ’

‘ Ah ! my Theodore, we have no friend but you, and you are but a little page.’

‘ I would I were a stout knight, lady, and I would fight for you ’

‘ I warrant you,’ said Imogene ; ‘ you have a bold heart, little Theodore, and a kind one Oh, holy Virgin ! I pray thee guard in all perils my bright-eyed Lothair ! ’

‘ Lord Branchimont is the finest knight I ever set eyes upon,’ said Theodore ‘ I would I were his squire.’

‘ Thou shalt be his squire, too, little Theodore, if all goes well.’

‘ Oh ! glorious day, when I shall wear a sword instead of a scarf ! Shall I indeed be his squire, lady sweet ? ’

‘ Indeed I think thou wilt make a very proper squire.’

‘ I would I were a knight like Lord Branchimont ; as tall as a lance, and as strong as a lion ; and such a fine beard too ! ’

‘ It is indeed a beard, Theodore,’ said the Lady Imogene. ‘ When wilt thou have one like it ? ’

‘ Another summer, perchance,’ said Theodore, passing his small palm musingly over his smooth chin.

‘ Another summer ! ’ said the Lady Imogene, laughing ; ‘ why, I may as soon hope to have a beard myself.’

‘ I hope you will have Lord Branchimont’s,’ said the page.

‘ Amen ! ’ responded the lady.

III

The apprehensions of the little Theodore proved to be too well founded. On the morning after the meeting of Lady Imogene with Lord Branchimont at the shrine of Charolois, she was summoned to the presence of her father ; and, after having been loaded with every species of reproach and invective for her clandestine meeting with their hereditary foe, she was confined to a chamber in one of the loftiest towers of the castle, which she was never permitted to quit, except to walk in a long gloomy gallery, with an old female servant remarkable for the acerbity of her mind and manners. Her page escaped punishment by flight ; and her only resource and amusement was her mandolin.

The tower in which the Lady Imogene was imprisoned sprang out of a steep so precipitous that the position was considered impregnable. She was therefore permitted to open her lattice, which was not even barred. The landscape before her, which was picturesque and richly wooded, consisted of the enclosed chase of Charolois ; but her jailers had taken due care that her chamber should not command a view of the castle of Branchimont. The valley and all its moving life were indeed entirely shut out from her. Often the day vanished without a human being appearing in sight. Very unhappy was the Lady Imogene, gazing on the silent woods, or pouring forth her passion over her lonely lute.

A miserable week had nearly elapsed. It was noon ; the Lady Imogene was seated alone in her chamber, leaning her head upon her hand in thought, and dreaming of her Lothair, when a fluttering noise suddenly roused her, and, looking up, she beheld, to her astonishment, perched on the high back of a chair, a beautiful bird—a pigeon whiter than snow, with an azure beak, and eyes blazing with a thousand shifting tints. Not alarmed was the beautiful

bird when the Lady Imogene gently approached it : but it looked up to her with eyes of intelligent tenderness and flapped with some earnestness its pure and sparkling plume. The Lady Imogene smiled with marvelling pleasure, and for the first time since her captivity, and putting forth her hand, which was even whiter than the wing, she patted the bright neck of the glad stranger, and gently stroked its soft plumage

‘ Heaven hath sent me a friend,’ exclaimed the beautiful Imogene. ‘ Ah ! what what is this ? ’

‘ Didst thou call, Lady Imogene ? ’ inquired the harsh voice of acid Martha, whom the exclamation of her mistress had summoned to the door.

‘ Nothing nothing I want nothing,’ quickly answered Imogene, as she seized the bird up with her hand, and, pressing it to her bosom, answered Martha over her shoulder ‘ Did she see thee, my treasure ? ’ continued the agitated Imogene. ‘ Oh ! did she see thee, my joy ? Methinks we were not discovered.’ So saying, and tripping along on the lightest step imaginable, the captive secured the door ; then bringing forth the bird from its sweet shelter, she produced a letter, which she had suddenly detected to be fastened under its left wing, and which she had perceived, in an instant, to be written by Lord Branchimont.

Her sight was dizzy, her cheek pale, her breath seemed to have deserted her. She looked up to heaven, she looked down upon the letter, and then she covered it with a thousand kisses ; then, making a vigorous effort to collect herself, she read its strange and sweet contents .

‘ **LOTHAIR TO IMOGENE.**

‘ Soul of my existence ! Mignon, in whom you may place implicit trust, has promised me to bear you this sign of my love. Oh, I love you, Imogene ! I love you more even than this bird can the beautiful sky ! Kiss the dove

a thousand times, that I may steal the kisses again from his neck, and catch, even at this distance, your fragrant breath. My beloved, I am planning your freedom and our happiness. Each day Mignon shall come to tell you how we speed ; each day shall he bring back some testimony of your fidelity to your own

‘LOTHAIR.’

It was read it was read with gushing and fast-flowing tears tears of wild joy A thousand times, ay, a thousand times, Imogene embraced the faithful Mignon ; nor could she indeed have ever again parted with him, had she not remembered that all this time her Lothair was anxiously awaiting the return of his messenger. So she tore a leaf from her tablets and inscribed her devotion : then, fastening it with care under the wing, she bore Mignon to the window, and, bestowing upon him a last embrace, permitted him to extend his beautiful wings and launch into the air.

Bright in the sun glanced the white bird as it darted into the deep-blue sky. Imogene watched it until the sparkling form changed into a dusky shade, and the dusky shade vanished into the blending distance.

IV

It was now a principal object with the fair captive of Charolois, that her unsympathising attendant should enter her chamber as little as possible, and only at seasons when there was no chance of a visit from Mignon Faithful was the beautiful bird in these daily visits of consolation ; and, by his assistance, the correspondence with Lothair respecting her escape was actively maintained A thousand plans were formed by the sanguine lovers a thousand plans were canvassed, and then decided to be impracticable. One

day, Martha was to be bribed, another, young Theodore was to re-enter the castle disguised as a girl, and become, by some contrivance, her attendant; but reflection ever proved that these were as wild as lovers' plans are wont to be; and another week stole away without anything being settled. Yet this second week was not so desolate as the first. On the contrary, it was full of exciting hope; and each day to hear that Lothair still adored her, and each day to be enabled to breathe back to him her own adoration, solaced the hours of her captivity. But Fate, that will often frown upon the fortunes of true love, decided that this sweet source of consolation should flow on no longer. Rufus, the huntsman, who was ever prowling about, and who at all times had a terribly quick eye for a bird, one day observed the carrier-pigeon sallying forth from the window of the tower. His practised sense instantly assured him that the bird was trained, and he resolved to watch its course.

'Hah, hah!' said Rufus, the huntsman, 'is Branchimont thy dovecot? Methinks, my little rover, thou bearest news I long to read.'

Another and another day passed, and again and again Rufus observed the visits of Mignon; so, taking his cross-bow one fair morning, ere the dew had left the flowers, he wandered forth in the direction of Branchimont. True to his mission, Mignon soon appears, skimming along the sky. Beautiful, beautiful bird! Fond, faithful messenger of love! Who can doubt that thou well comprehendest the kindly purpose of thy consoling visits! Thou bringest joy to the unhappy, and hope to the despairing! She shall kiss thee, bright Mignon! Yes! an embrace from lips sweeter than the scented dawn in which thou revellest, shall repay thee for all thy fidelity! And already the Lady Imogene is at her post, gazing upon the unclouded sky, and straining her beautiful eyes, as it were to anticipate the slight and gladsome form, whose first presence

ever makes her heart tremble with a host of wild and conflicting emotions.

Ah ! through the air an arrow from a bow that never erred an arrow swifter than thy swiftest flight, Mignon, whizzes with fell intent. The snake that darts upon its unconscious prey less fleet and fatal ! It touches thy form it transfixes thy beautiful breast ! Was there no good spirit, then, to save thee, thou hope of the hopeless ! Alas, alas ! the blood gushes from thy breast, and from thine azure beak ! Thy transcendant eye grows dim all is over ! The carrier-pigeon falls to the earth !

v

A day without hearing from Lothair was madness ; and, indeed, when hour after heavy hour rolled away without the appearance of Mignon, and the Lady Imogene found herself gazing upon the vanishing twilight, she became nearly frantic with disappointment and terror. While light remained, an indefinite hope maintained her ; but when it was indeed night, and nothing but the outline of the surrounding hills was perceptible, she could no longer restrain herself, and, bursting into hysteric tears, she threw herself upon the floor of her chamber. Were they discovered ? Had Lothair forgotten her ? Wearied with fruitless efforts, had he left her to her miserable, her solitary fate ? There was a slight sound something seemed to have dropped. She looked up. At her side she beheld a letter, which, wrapped round a stone, had been thrown in at the window. She started up in an ecstacy of joy. She cursed herself for doubting for an instant the fidelity of her lover ! She tore open the letter, but so great was her emotion that some minutes elapsed before she could decipher its contents. At length she learned that, on the ensuing eve, Lothair and Theodore, disguised as huntsmen of Charolois, would contrive to meet in safety beneath her

window, and for the rest she must dare to descend. It was a bold, a very perilous plan. It was the project of desperation. But there are moments in life when desperation becomes success. Nor was the spirit of the Lady Imogene one that would easily quail. Hers was a true woman's heart; and she could venture everything for love. She examined the steep; she cast a rapid glance at the means of making the descent. her shawls, her clothes, the hangings of her bed here were resources here was hope!

Full of these thoughts, some time elapsed before she was struck at the unusual mode in which the communication reached her. Where was Mignon? But the handwriting was the handwriting of Lothair. That she could not mistake. She might, however, have observed, that the characters were faint that the paper had the appearance of being stained or washed, but this she did not observe. She was sanguine she was confident in the wisdom of Lothair. She knelt before an image of the Virgin, and poured forth her supplications for the success of their enterprise. And then, exhausted by all the agitation of the day, the Lady Imogene sunk into a deep repose.

VI

Morn came at length, but brought no Mignon! 'He has his reasons,' answered the Lady Imogene. 'Lothair is never wrong. And soon, right soon, I hope, we shall need no messenger.' Oh, what a long, long day was this, the last of her captivity! Will the night never come that night she had once so much dreaded? Sun, wilt thou never set? There is no longer gladness in thy beams. The shadows, indeed, grow longer, and yet thine orb is as high in heaven as if it were an everlasting noon! The unceasing cry of the birds, once so consoling, now only made her restless. She listened, and she listened, until

at length the rosy sky called forth their last trilling chant, and the star of evening summoned them to roost.

It was twilight : pacing her chamber, and praying to the Virgin, the hours at length stole away. The chimes of the sanctuary told her that it wanted but a quarter of an hour to midnight. Already she had formed a rope of shawls. now she fastened it to the lattice with all her force. The bell struck twelve, and the Lady Imogene delivered herself to her fate. Slowly and fearfully she descended, long suspended in the air, until her feet at length touched a ledge of rock. Cautiously feeling her footing, she now rested, and looked around her. She had descended about twenty feet. The moon shone bright on the rest of the descent, which was more rugged. It seemed not impracticable she clambered down.

‘Hist ! hist !’ said a familiar voice. ‘all is right, lady but why did you not answer us ?’

‘Ah ! Theodore, where is my Lothair ?’

‘Lord Branchimont is shaded by the trees give me thy hand, sweet lady. Courage ! all is right ; but indeed you should have answered us.’

Imogene de Charolois is in the arms of Lothair de Branchimont.

‘We have no time for embraces,’ said Theodore ; ‘the horses are ready. The Virgin be praised, all is right. I would not go through such an eight-and-forty hours again to be dubbed a knight on the spot. Have you Mignon ?’

‘Mignon, indeed ! he has not visited me these two days.’

‘But my letter,’ said Lothair ‘you received it ?’

‘It was thrown in at my window,’ said the Lady Imogene.

‘My heart misgives me,’ said little Theodore. ‘Away ! there is no time to lose. Hist ! I hear footsteps. This way, dear friends. Hist ! a shout ! Fly ! fly ! Lord Branchimont, we are betrayed !’

And indeed from all quarters simultaneous sounds now rose, and torches seemed suddenly to wave in all quarters.

Imogene clung to the neck of Lothair. 'We will die together!' she exclaimed, as she hid her face in his breast.

Lord Branchimont placed himself against a tree, and drew his mighty sword.

'Seize him!' shouted a voice, instantly recognised by Imogene, 'seize the robber!' shouted her father.

'At your peril!' answered Lothair to his surrounding foes.

They stood at bay an awful group! The father and his murdering minions, alike fearful of encountering Branchimont and slaying their chieftain's daughter; the red and streaming torches blending with the silver moonlight that fell full upon the fixed countenance of their entrapped victim and the distracted form of his devoted mistress.

There was a dead, still pause. It was broken by the denouncing tone of the father, 'Cowards! do you fear a single arm? Strike him dead! spare not the traitress!'

But still the vassals would not move; deep as was their feudal devotion, they loved the Lady Imogene, and dared to disobey.

'Let me, then, teach you your duty!' exclaimed the exasperated father. He advanced, but a wild shriek arrested his extended sword, and as thus they stood, all alike prepared for combat, yet all motionless, an arrow glanced over the shoulder of the Count and pierced Lord Branchimont to the heart. His sword fell from his grasp, and he died without a groan.

Yes! the same bow that had for ever arrested the airy course of Mignon, had now, as fatally and as suddenly, terminated the career of the master of the carrier-pigeon Vile Rufus, the huntsman, the murderous aim was true!

VII

The bell of the shrine of Charolois is again sounding; but how different its tone from the musical and inspiring

chime that summoned the weary vassals to their grateful vespers ! The bell of the shrine of Charolois is again sounding. Alas ! it tolls a gloomy knell. Oh ! valley of sweet waters, still are thy skies as pure as when she wandered by thy banks and mused over her beloved ! Still sets thy glowing sun ; and quivering and bright, like the ascending soul of a hero, still Hesperus rises from thy dying glory ! But she, the maiden fairer than the fairest eve no more shall her light step trip among the fragrance of its flowers : no more shall her lighter voice emulate the music of thy melodious birds. Oh, yes ! she is dead the beautiful Imogene is dead ! Three days of misery heralded her decease. But comfort is there in all things ; for the good priest who had often administered consolation to his unhappy mistress over her brother's tomb, and who knelt by the side of her dying couch, assured many a sorrowful vassal, and many a sympathising pilgrim who loved to listen to the mournful tale, that her death was indeed a beatitude ; for he did not doubt, from the distracted expressions that occasionally caught his ear, that the Holy Spirit, in that material form he most loves to honour, to wit, the semblance of a pure white dove, often solaced by his presence the last hours of Imogene de Charolois !



THE CONSUL'S DAUGHTER

THE CONSUL'S DAUGHTER

Chapter I

AT one of the most beautiful ports in the Mediterranean Major Ponsonby held the office of British Consul. The Parliamentary interest of the noble family with which he was connected had obtained for him this office, after serving his country, with no slight distinction, during the glorious war of the Peninsular. Major Ponsonby was a widower, and his family consisted of an only daughter, Henrietta, who was a child of very tender years when he first obtained his appointment, but who had completed her eighteenth year at the period, memorable in her life, which these pages attempt to commemorate. A girl of singular beauty was Henrietta Ponsonby, but not merely remarkable for her beauty. Her father, a very accomplished gentleman, had himself superintended her education with equal care and interest. In their beautiful solitude, for they enjoyed the advantage of very little society save that of those passing travellers who occasionally claimed his protection and hospitality, the chief, and certainly the most engaging pursuit of Major Ponsonby, had been to assist the development of the lively talents of his daughter, and to watch with delight, not unattended with anxiety, the formation of her ardent and imaginative character. He had himself imparted to her a skilful practice in those fine arts in which he himself

excelled, and a knowledge of those exquisite languages which he himself not only spoke with facility, but with whose rich and interesting literature he was intimately acquainted. He was careful, also, that, although almost an alien from her native country, she should not be ignorant of the progress of its mind ; and no inconsiderable portion of his income had of late years been expended in importing from England the productions of those eminent writers of which we are justly as proud as of the heroes under whose flag he had himself conquered in Portugal and Spain

The progress of the daughter amply repaid the father for his care, and rewarded him for his solicitude . from the fond child of his affections she had become the cherished companion of his society : her lively fancy and agreeable conversation prevented solitude from degenerating into loneliness . she diffused over their happy home that indefinable charm, that spell of unceasing, yet soothing excitement, with which the constant presence of an amiable, a lovely, and accomplished woman can alone imbue existence ; without which life, indeed, under any circumstances, is very dreary ; and with which life, indeed, under any circumstances, is never desperate.

There were moments, perhaps, when Major Ponsonby, who was not altogether inexperienced in the great world, might sigh, that one so eminently qualified as his daughter to shine even amid its splendour, should be destined to a career so obscure as that which necessarily attended the daughter of a Consul in a distant country . It sometimes cost the father's heart a pang that this fair and fragrant flower should blush unseen, and waste its perfume even in their lovely wilderness , and then, with all a father's pride, and under all the influence of that worldly ambition from which men are never free, he would form plans by which she might visit, and visit with advantage, her native country. All the noble cousins were thought over, under

whose distinguished patronage she might enter that great and distant world she was so capable of adorning, and more than once he had endeavoured to intimate to Henrietta that it might be better for them both that they should for a season part : but the Consul's daughter shrunk from these whispers as some beautiful tree from the murmurs of a rising storm. She could not conceive existence without her father the father under whose breath and sight she had ever lived and flourished the father to whom she was indebted, not only for existence, but all the attributes that made life so pleasant, her sire, her tutor, her constant company, her dear, dear friend. To part from him, even though but for a season, and to gain splendour, appeared to her pure, yet lively imagination, the most fatal of fortunes ; a terrible destiny an awful dispensation. They had never parted, scarcely for an hour : once, indeed, he had been absent for three days ; he had sailed with the fleet on public business to a neighbouring port, he had been obliged to leave his daughter, and the daughter remembered those terrible three days like a frightful dream, the recollection of which made her shudder.

Major Ponsonby had inherited no patrimony he possessed only the small income derived from his office, and a slender pension, which rewarded many wounds ; but, in the pleasant place in which their lot was cast, these moderate means obtained for them not merely the necessaries, but all the luxuries of life. They inhabited in the town a palace worthy of the high, though extinct nobility, whose portraits and statues lined their lofty saloons, and filled their long corridors and graceful galleries, and about three miles from the town, on a gentle ascent facing the ocean, and embowered in groves of orange and olive trees, the fanciful garden enclosed in a thick wall of Indian fig and blooming aloes, was a most delicate casino, rented at a rate for which a garret may not be hired in England ; but, indeed, a paradise. Of this pavilion Miss Ponsonby

was the mistress ; and here she lived amid fruit and flowers, surrounded by her birds : and here she might be often seen at sunset glancing amid its beauties, with an eye as brilliant, and a step as airy, as the bright gazelle that ever glided or bounded at her side.

Chapter II

One summer day, when everybody was asleep in the little sultry city where Major Ponsonby, even in his siesta, watched over the interests of British commerce for it was a city, and was blessed with the holy presence of a bishop a young Englishman disembarked from an imperial merchant brig just arrived from Otranto, and, according to custom, took his way to the Consul's house. He was a man of an age apparently verging towards thirty, and, although the native porter, who bore his luggage and directed his path, proved that, as he was accompanied not even by a single servant, he did not share the general reputation of his countrymen for wealth, his appearance to those practised in society was not undistinguished. Tall, slender, and calm, his air, though unaffected, was that of a man not deficient in self-confidence ; and whether it were the art of his tailor, or the result of his own good frame, his garb, although remarkably plain, had that indefinable style which we associate with the costume of a man of some mark and breeding.

On arriving at the Consul's house, he was ushered through a large, dark, cool hall, at the end of which was a magnificent staircase leading to the suite of saloons, into a small apartment on the ground-floor fitted up in the English style, and which, although it offered the appearance of the library of an English gentleman, was, in fact, the consular office. Dwarf bookcases encircled the room, occasionally crowned by a marble bust, or bronze group. The ample table was

covered with papers, and a vacant easy-chair was evidently the consular throne. A portrait of his Britannic majesty figured on the walls of one part of the chamber, and over the mantel was another portrait, which immediately engaged the attention of the traveller, and, indeed, monopolised his observation. He had a very ample opportunity of studying it, for nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before he was disturbed. It was the full-length portrait of a young lady. She stood on a terrace in a garden, and by her side was a gazelle. Her form was of wonderful symmetry; but although her dress was not English, the expression of her countenance reminded the traveller of the beauties of his native land. The dazzling complexion, the large deep blue eye, the high white forehead, the clustering brown hair, were all northern, but northern of the highest order. She held in her small hand a branch of orange-blossom the hand was fairer than the flower.

‘Signor Ferrers, I believe,’ said a shrill voice. The traveller started, and turned round. Before him stood a little, parched-up, grinning, bowing Italian, holding in his hand the card that the traveller had sent up to the Consul.

‘My name is Ferrers,’ replied the traveller, slightly bowing, and speaking in a low, sweet tone.

‘Signor Ponsonby is at the casino,’ said the Italian: ‘I have the honour to be the chancellor of the British Consulate.’

It is singular that a mercantile agent should be styled a Consul, and his chief clerk a chancellor.

‘I have the honour to be the chancellor of the British Consulate,’ said the Italian, ‘and I will take the earliest opportunity of informing the Consul of your arrival. From Otranto, I believe? All well, I hope, at Otranto?’

‘I hope so too,’ replied the traveller, ‘and so I believe.’

‘You will be pleased to leave your passport, sir, with me the Consul will be most happy to see you at the

casino about sunset he will be very happy to see you at the casino. I am sorry that I detained you for a moment, but I was at my siesta. I will take the earliest opportunity of informing the Consul of your arrival, but at present all the consular messengers are taking their siesta, the moment one is awake I shall send him to the casino. May I take the liberty of inquiring whether you have any letters for the Consul ?'

'None,' replied the traveller.

The chancellor shrugged his shoulders a little, as if he regretted he had been roused from his siesta for a traveller who had not even a letter of introduction, and then turned on his heel to depart.

The traveller took up his hat, hesitated a moment, and then said, 'Pray, may I inquire of whom this is a portrait ?'

'Certainly,' replied the chancellor, 'tis the Signora Ponsonby'

Chapter III

It was even upon as ignoble an animal as a Barbary ass, goaded by a dusky little islander almost in a state of nudity, that, an hour before sunset on the day of his arrival, the English traveller approached the casino of the Consul's daughter, for there a note from Major Ponsonby had invited him to repair, to be introduced to his daughter, and to taste his oranges. The servant who received him led Mr Ferrers to a very fine plane-tree, under whose spreading branches was arranged a banquet of fruit and flowers, coffee in cups of oriental filigree, and wines of the Levant, cooled in snow. The worthy Consul was smoking his chibouque, and his daughter, as she rose to greet their guest, let her guitar fall upon the turf.

The original of the portrait proved that the painter had no need to flatter, and the dignified, yet cordial manner,

the radiant smile, and the sweet and thrilling voice with which she welcomed her countryman, would have completed the spell, had, indeed, the wanderer been one prepared, or capable of being enchanted. As it was, Mr Ferrers, while he returned his welcome with becoming complaisance, exhibited the breeding of a man accustomed to sights of strangeness and of beauty; and, while he expressed his sense of the courtesy of his companions, admired their garden, and extolled the loveliness of the prospect, he did not depart for a moment from that subdued, and even sedate manner, which indicates the individual whom the world has little left to astonish, and less to enrapture, although, perhaps, much to please. Yet he was fluent in conversation. sensible and polished, and very agreeable. It appeared that he had travelled much, though he was far from boasting of his exploits. He had been long absent from England, had visited Egypt and Arabia, and had sojourned at Damascus. While he refused the pipe, he proved, by his observations on its use, that he was learned in its practice; and he declined his host's offer of a file of English journals, as he was not interested in their contents. His host was too polished to originate any inquiry which might throw light upon the connections or quality of his guest, and his guest imitated his example. Nothing could be more perfectly well-bred than his whole demeanour. he listened to the major with deference, and he never paid Miss Ponsonby a single compliment: he never even asked her to sing; but the fond father did not omit this attention. Henrietta, in the most unaffected manner, complied with his request, because, as she was in the habit of singing every evening to her father, she saw no reason why he should, on this occasion, be deprived of an amusement to which he was accustomed. As the welcome sea-breeze rose and stirred the flowers and branches, her voice blended with its fresh and fragrant breath. It was a beautiful voice; and the wild and plain-

tive air in which she indulged, indigenous to their isle, harmonised alike with the picturesque scene and the serene hour. Mr. Ferrers listened with attention, and thanked her for her courtesy. Before they withdrew to the casino he even requested the favour of her repeating the gratification, but in so quiet a manner that most young ladies would have neglected to comply with a wish expressed with so little favour.

The principal chamber of the casino was adorned with drawings by the Consul's daughter: they depicted the surrounding scenery, and were executed by the hand of a master. Mr. Ferrers examined them with interest: his observations proved his knowledge, and made them more than suspect his skill. He admitted that he had some slight practice in the fine arts, and offered to lend his portfolio to Miss Ponsonby, if she thought it would amuse her. Upon the subject of scenery he spoke with more animation than on any other topic: his conversation, indeed, teemed with the observations of a fine eye and cultivated taste.

At length he departed, leaving behind him a very favourable impression. Henrietta and her father agreed that he was a most gentlemanlike personage: that he was very clever and very agreeable; and they were glad to know him. The major detailed all the families and all the persons of the name of Ferrers of whom he had ever heard, and with whom he had been acquainted; and, before he slept, wondered, for the fiftieth time, 'What Ferrers he was?'

Chapter IV

The next morning, Mr. Ferrers sent his portfolio to Miss Ponsonby, to the Consul's house, in the city; and her father called upon him immediately afterwards, to return his original visit, and to request him to dine with

them. Mr. Ferrers declined the invitation ; but begged to be permitted to pay his respects again at the casino, in the evening. The major, under the circumstances, ventured to press his new acquaintance to comply with their desire ; but Mr. Ferrers became immediately very reserved, and the Consul desisted.

Towards sunset, however, mounted on his Barbary ass, Mr. Ferrers again appeared at the gate of the casino, as mild and agreeable as before. They drank their coffee and ate their fruit, chatted and sang, and again repaired to the pavilion. Here they examined the contents of the portfolio : they were very rich ; for it contained drawings of all kinds, and almost of every celebrated place in the vicinity of the Mediterranean shores ; Saracenic palaces, Egyptian temples, mosques of Damascus, and fountains of Stamboul. Here was a Bedouin encampment, shaded by a grove of palms ; and there a Spanish Signorita, shrouded in her mantilla, glided along the Alameda. There was one circumstance, however, about these drawings, which struck Miss Ponsonby as at least remarkable. It was obvious that some pencil-mark in the corner of each drawing, in all probability containing the name and initials of the artist, had been carefully obliterated.

Among the drawings were several sketches of a yacht which Mr Ferrers passed over quickly, and without notice. The Consul, however, who was an honorary member of the yacht club, and interested in every vessel of the squadron that visited the Mediterranean, very naturally inquired of Mr. Ferrers, to whom the schooner in question belonged. Mr. Ferrers seemed rather confused ; but at length he said : ‘ Oh, they are stupid things : I did not know they were here. The yacht is a yacht of a friend of mine, who was at Cadiz.’

‘ Oh, I see the name,’ said the major, ‘ “ THE KRAKEN.” Why, that is Lord Bohun’s yacht !’

‘ The same,’ said Mr. Ferrers, but perfectly composed.

‘ Ah ! do you know Lord Bohun ? ’ said Miss Ponsonby. ‘ We have often expected him here. I wonder he has never paid us a visit, papa. They say he is the most eccentric person in the world. Is he so ? ’

‘ I never heard much in his favour,’ said Mr. Ferrers. ‘ I believe he has made himself a great fool, as most young nobles do.’

‘ Well, I have heard very extraordinary things of him,’ said the Consul. ‘ He is a great traveller, at all events, which I think a circumstance in every man’s favour.’

‘ And then he has been a Guerilla chieftain,’ said Miss Ponsonby; ‘ and a Bedouin robber, and I hardly know what else; but Colonel Garth, who was here last summer, told us the most marvellous tales of his lordship.’

‘ Affectations ! ’ said Mr Ferrers, with a sneer ‘ Bohun, however, has some excuses for his folly for he was an orphan, I believe, in his cradle.’

‘ Is he clever ? ’ inquired Miss Ponsonby.

‘ Colonel Garth is a much better judge than I am,’ replied Mr Ferrers ‘ I confess I have no taste for Guerilla chieftains, or Bedouin robbers. I am not at all romantic ’

And here he attracted her attention to what he called an attempt at a bull-fight; and the conversation dropped, and Lord Bohun was forgotten.

A fortnight passed away, and Mr Ferrers was still a visitant of our Mediterranean isle. His intimacy with the Consul and his daughter remained on the same footing. Every evening he paid them a visit; and every evening, when he had retired, the major and his daughter agreed that he was a most agreeable person, though rather odd; the worthy Consul always adding his regret that he would not dine with him, and his wonder as to what Ferrers he was.

Now, it so happened that it was a royal birthday, and the bishop, and several of the leading persons of the town, had agreed to partake of the hospitality of the British

Consul. The major was anxious that Mr. Ferrers should meet them. He discussed this important point with his daughter.

‘My darling, I don’t like to ask him : he really is such a very odd man. The moment you ask him to dinner, he looks as if you had offered him an insult. Shall we send him a formal invitation ? I wonder what Ferrers he is ? I should be gratified if he would dine with us. Besides, he would see something of our native society here, which is amusing. What shall we do ?’

‘I will ask him,’ replied Miss Ponsonby. ‘I don’t think he could refuse me.’

‘I am sure I could not,’ replied the major, smiling.

And so Miss Ponsonby seized an opportunity of telling Mr. Ferrers that she had a favour to ask him. He was more fortunate than he imagined, was his courteous reply.

‘Then you must dine with papa, to-morrow.’

Mr. Ferrers’ brow immediately clouded

‘Now, do not look so suspicious,’ said Miss Ponsonby. ‘Do you think that ours is an Italian banquet ? Is there poison in the dish ? Or do you live only on fruit and flowers ?’ continued Miss Ponsonby. ‘Do you know,’ she added, with an arch smile, ‘I think you must be a ghou!’

A sort of smile struggled with a scowl over the haughty countenance of the Englishman.

‘You will come !’ said Miss Ponsonby, most winningly.

‘I have already trespassed too much upon Major Ponsonby’s hospitality,’ muttered Mr. Ferrers ; ‘I have no claim to it.’

‘You are our countryman.’

‘Unknown.’

‘The common consequence of being a traveller.’

‘Yes but in short I ’

‘You must come,’ said Miss Ponsonby, with a glance like sunshine

‘ You do with me what you like,’ exclaimed Mr. Ferrers, with animation. ‘ Beautiful weather,’ he concluded

Mr. Ferrers was therefore their guest, and strange it is to say, that from this day, from some cause, which it is now useless to ascertain, this gentleman became an habitual guest at the Consul’s table, accepting a general invitation without even a frown, and, what is more remarkable, availing himself of it, scarcely with an exception.

Could it be the Consul’s daughter that effected this revolution? Time may perhaps solve this interesting problem. Certainly, whether it were that she was seldom seen to more advantage than when presiding over society; or whether, elate with her triumph, she was particularly pleasing, because she was particularly pleased; certainly Henrietta Ponsonby never appeared to greater advantage than she did upon the day of this memorable festival. Mr. Ferrers, when he quitted the house, sauntered to the mole, and gazed upon the moonlight sea. A dangerous symptom. Yet the eye of Mr. Ferrers had before this been fixed in mute abstraction on many a summer wave, when Dian was in her bower; and this man, cold and inscrutable as he seemed, was learned in woman, and woman’s ways. Shall a Consul’s daughter melt a heart that boasted of being callous, and clear a brow that prided itself upon its clouds?

But if the state of Mr. Ferrers’ heart were doubtful, I must perforce confess that, as time drew on, Henrietta Ponsonby, if she had ventured to inquire, could have little hesitated as to the state of her own feelings. Her companion, her constant companion, for such Mr. Ferrers had now insensibly become, exercised over her an influence, of the power of which she was unconscious, only because it was unceasing. Had for a moment the excitement of her novel feelings ceased, she would have discovered, with wonder, perhaps with some degree of fear, how changed she had become since the first evening he approached her

pleasant easiness. And yet Mr. Ferrers was not her lover. No act, no word of gallantry, no indication of affection, to her inexperienced sense, ever escaped him. All that he did was, that he sought her society ; but, then, there was no other. The only wonder was, that he should remain among them ; but, then, he had been everywhere. The vague love of lounging and repose, which ever and anon falls upon men long accustomed to singular activity and strange adventure, sufficiently accounted for his conduct. But, whatever might be his motives, certain it is, that the English stranger dangerously interested the feelings of the Consul's daughter ; and when she thought the time must arrive for his departure, she drove the recollection from her mind with a swiftness which indicated the pang which she experienced by its occurrence. And no marvel either, that the heart of this young and lovely maiden softened at the thought, and in the presence of her companion : no marvel, and no shame, for nature had invested the Englishman with soul-subduing qualities. His elegant person ; his tender, yet reserved manners ; his experienced, yet ornate mind ; the flashes of a brilliant, yet mellowed imagination, which ever and anon would break forth in his conversation : perhaps, too, the air of melancholy, and even of mystery, which enveloped him, were all spells potent in the charm that enchants the heart of woman. And the major, what did he think ? The good Consul was puzzled. The confirmed intimacy between his daughter and his guest alike perplexed and pleased him. He certainly never had become acquainted with a man whom he would sooner have preferred for a son-in-law, if he had only known who he was. But two months, and more than two months, had elapsed, and threw no light upon this most necessary point of knowledge. The Consul hesitated as to his conduct. His anxiety almost mastered his good breeding. Now he thought of speaking to Mr. Ferrers, and then to his daughter. There were objections to each line of conduct, and his con-

fidence in Mr. Ferrers was very great, although he did not exactly know who he was : he was decidedly a gentleman , and there was, throughout his conduct and conversation, a tone of such strict propriety , there was so much delicacy, and good feeling, and sound principle, in all he said and did, that the Consul at length resolved, that he had no right to suspect, and no authority to question him. He was just on the point, however, of conferring with his daughter, when the town was suddenly enlivened, and his attention suddenly engrossed, by the arrival of two other English gentlemen

Chapter V

It must be confessed that Captain Ormsby and Major M'Intyre were two very different sort of men to Mr. Ferrers. Never were two such gay, noisy, pleasant, commonplace persons. They were '*on leave*' from one of the Mediterranean garrisons, had scampered through Italy, shot red-legged partridges all along the Barbary coast, and even smoked a pipe with the Dey of Algiers. They were intoxicated with all the sights they had seen, and all the scrapes which they had encountered, and which they styled '*regular adventures*': and they insisted upon giving every one a description of what everybody had heard or seen. In consequence of their arrival, Mr. Ferrers discontinued dining with his accustomed host ; and resumed his old habit of riding up to the casino, every evening, on his Barbary ass, to eat oranges, and talk to the Consul's daughter.

'I suppose you know Florence, Mr. Ferrers ?' said Major M'Intyre

Mr Ferrers bowed

'St. Peter's, of course, you have seen ?' said Captain Ormsby

‘ But have you seen it during Holy Week ? ’ said the major. ‘ That ’s the thing.’

‘ Ah, I see you have been everywhere,’ said the captain : ‘ Algiers, of course ? ’

‘ I never was at Algiers,’ replied Mr. Ferrers, quite rejoiced at the circumstance ; and he walked away, and played with the gazelle.

‘ By jove,’ said the major, with elevated eyes, ‘ not been at Algiers ! why, Mr. Consul, I thought you said Mr. Ferrers was a very great traveller indeed ; and he has not been at Algiers ! I consider Algiers more worth seeing than any place we ever visited. Don’t you, Ormsby ? ’

The Consul inquired whether he had met any compatriots at that famous place. The military travellers answered that they had not ; but that Lord Bohun’s yacht was there ; and they understood his lordship was about to proceed to this island. The conversation for some time then dwelt upon Lord Bohun, and his adventures, eccentricities, and wealth. But Captain Ormsby finally pronounced ‘ Bohun a devilish good fellow.’

‘ Do you know Lord Bohun ? ’ inquired Mr. Ferrers.

‘ Why, no ! ’ confessed Captain Ormsby : ‘ but he is a devilish intimate friend of a devilish intimate friend of mine.’

Mr. Ferrers made a sign to Miss Ponsonby ; she rose, and followed him into the garden. ‘ I cannot endure the jabber of these men,’ said Mr. Ferrers.

‘ They are very good-natured,’ said Miss Ponsonby.

‘ It may be so , and I have no right to criticise them. I dare say they will think me very dull. However, it appears you will have Lord Bohun here in a short time, and then I shall be forgotten.’

‘ That is not a very kind speech. You would not be forgotten, even if absent , and you have, I hope, no thought of quitting us.’

‘ I have remained here too long. Besides, I have no wish to play a second part to Lord Bohun.’

‘ Who thinks of Lord Bohun ? and why should you play a second part to any one ? You are a little perverse, Mr. Ferrers.’

‘ I have been in this island ten weeks,’ said Mr Ferrers, thoughtfully.

‘ When we begin to count time, we are generally weary,’ said Miss Ponsonby.

‘ You are in error. I would willingly compound that the rest of my existence should be as happy as the last ten weeks. They have been very happy,’ said Mr. Ferrers, musingly ; ‘ very happy, indeed. The only *happy* time I ever knew. They have been so serene, and so sweet.’

‘ And why not remain, then ? ’ said Miss Ponsonby, in a low voice.

‘ There are many reasons,’ said Mr. Ferrers, and he offered his arm to Miss Ponsonby, and they walked together, far away from the casino ‘ These ten weeks have been so serene, and so sweet,’ he continued, but in a calm voice, ‘ because you have been my companion. My life has taken its colour from your character. Now, listen to me, dearest Miss Ponsonby, and be not alarmed. I love you ! ’

Her arm trembled in his.

‘ Yes, I *love* you ; and, believe me, I use that word with no common feeling. It describes the entire devotion of my existence to your life ; and my complete sympathy with every attribute of your nature. Calm as may be my speech, I love you with a burning heart ’

She bowed her head, and covered her face with her right hand.

‘ Most beautiful lady,’ continued Mr. Ferrers, ‘ pardon me if I agitate you, for my respect is equal to my love. I stand before you a stranger, utterly unknown, and I am so circumstanced that it is not in my power, even at *this* moment, to offer any explanation of my equivocal position. Yet, whatever I may be, I offer my existence, and all its accidents, good or bad, in homage to your heart. May

I indulge the delicious hope that, if not now accepted, they are at least considered with kindness and without suspicion ? ’

‘ Oh, yes ! without *suspicion*, ’ murmured Miss Ponsonby
 ‘ without suspicion. Nothing, nothing in the world shall ever make me believe that you are not so good as you are gifted ’

‘ Darling Henrietta ! ’ exclaimed Mr Ferrers, in a voice of melting tenderness ; and he pressed her to his heart, and sealed his love upon her lips. ‘ This, this is confidence , this, this is the woman’s love I long have sighed for. Doubt me not, dearest ; never doubt me ! Say you are mine ; once more pledge yourself to me. I leave our isle this night. Nay, start not, sweet one. ’Tis for our happiness ; this night I shall return to claim my bride. Now, listen, darling ! our engagement, our sweet and solemn engagement, is secret. You will never hear from me until we meet again ; you may hear of me, and not to my advantage. What matter ? You love me , you cannot doubt me. I leave with you my honour : an honour *never sullied*. Mind that. Oh no, you cannot doubt me ! ’

‘ I am yours . I care not what they say : if there be no faith and truth in you, I will despair of them for ever. ’

‘ Beautiful being ! you make me mad with joy. Has fate reserved for me, indeed, this treasure ? Am I at length loved, and loved only for myself ! ’

Chapter VI

He has gone ; Mr. Ferrers has departed. What an event ! What a marvellous event ! A revolution had occurred in the life of Henrietta Ponsonby : she was no longer her own mistress ; she was no longer her father’s child. She belonged to another ; and that other a stranger, an unknown, and departed being ! How strange ! And

yet how sweet ! This beautiful young lady passed her days in pondering over her singular position. In vain she attempted to struggle with her destiny. In vain she depicted to herself the error, perhaps the madness, of her conduct. She was fascinated. She could not reason ; she could not communicate to her father all that had happened. A thousand times her lips moved to reveal her secret ; a thousand times an irresistible power restrained them. She remained silent, moody, and restless. she plucked flowers, and threw them to the wind. she gazed upon the sea, and watched the birds in abstraction wilder than their wing : and yet she would not doubt her betrothed. That voice so sweet and solemn, and so sincere, still lingered in her ear. the gaze of that pure and lofty brow was engraven on her memory. never could she forget those delicate adieus !

This change in his daughter was not unmarked by the Consul, who, after some reflection, could not hesitate in considering it as the result of the departure of Mr. Ferrers. The thought made him mournful. It pained his noble nature, that the guest whom he so respected might have trifled with the affections of the child whom he so loved. He spoke to the maiden ; but the maiden said she was happy. And, indeed, her conduct gave evidence of restlessness rather than misery, for her heart seemed sometimes exuberantly gay ; often did she smile, and ever did she sing. The Consul was conscious there was a mystery he could not fathom. It is bitter for a father at all times to feel that his child is unhappy, but doubly bitter is the pang when he feels that the cause is secret.

Three months, three heavy months passed away, and the cloud still rested on this once happy home. Suddenly Lord Bohun arrived, the much talked-of Lord Bohun, in his more talked-of yacht. The bustle which the arrival of this celebrated personage occasioned in the consular establishment was a diversion from the reserve, or the

gloom, which had so long prevailed there. Lord Bohun was a young, agreeable, and somewhat affected individual. He had a German chasseur and a Greek page. He was very luxurious, and rather troublesome, but infinitely amusing, both to the Consul and his daughter. He dined with them every day, and recounted his extraordinary adventures with considerable self-complacency. In the course of the week he scampered over every part of the island; and gave a magnificent entertainment on board the *Kraken*, to the bishop and the principal islanders, in honour of the Consul's daughter. Indeed it was soon very evident that his lordship entertained feelings of no ordinary admiration for his hostess. He paid her on all occasions the most marked attention; and though she, the Consul, who did not for a moment believe that these attentions indicated other than the transient feelings that become a lord, and so adventurous a lord, began to fear that his inexperienced Henrietta might again become the victim of the fugitive admiration of a traveller.

One evening at the casino, his lordship noticed a drawing of his own yacht, and started. The Consul explained to him, that the drawing had been copied by his daughter from a sketch by an English traveller, who preceded him. His name was inquired, and given.

'Ferrers!' exclaimed his lordship. 'What, has Ferrers been here?'

'You know Mr. Ferrers, then?' inquired Henrietta, with suppressed agitation.

'Oh yes, I know Ferrers.'

'A most agreeable and gentleman-like man,' said the Consul, anxious, he knew not why, that the conversation would cease.

'Oh yes, Ferrers is a very agreeable man. He piques himself on being agreeable, Mr. Ferrers.'

'From what I have observed of Mr. Ferrers,' said Henrietta, in a firm, and rather decided tone, 'I should

not have given him credit for any sentiment approaching to *conceit*.'

'He is fortunate in having such a defender,' said his lordship, bowing gallantly

'Our friends are scarcely worth possessing,' said Miss Ponsonby, 'unless they defend us when absent. But I am not aware that Mr. Ferrers needs any defence.'

His lordship turned on his heel, and hummed an opera air

'Mr. Ferrers paid us a long visit,' said the Consul, who was now desirous that the conversation should proceed.

'He had evidently a great inducement,' said Lord Bohun 'I wonder he ever departed'

'He is a great favourite in this house,' said Miss Ponsonby

'I perceive it,' said Lord Bohun

'What Ferrers is he?' inquired the Consul

'Oh, he has gentle blood in his veins,' said Lord Bohun. 'I never heard his breeding impeached'

'And I should think, nothing else,' said Miss Ponsonby

'Oh, I never heard anything particular against Ferrers,' said his lordship, 'except that he was a *roué*, and a little mad. That is all'

'Enough, I should think,' said Major Ponsonby, with a clouded brow.

'What a *roué* may be, I can scarcely be supposed to judge,' said Henrietta. 'If, however, it be a man remarkable for the deheacy of his thoughts and conduct, Mr. Ferrers has certainly some claim to the title. As for his madness, he was our constant companion for nearly three months if he be mad, it must be a very *little* indeed.'

'He was a great favourite of Henrietta,' said her father, with a forced smile

'Fortunate man!'

'Fortunate Ferrers!'

Lord Bohun stepped into the garden with the Consul. Miss Ponsonby was left alone. Firm as had been her previous demeanour, now, that she was alone, her agitated

countenance denoted the tumult of her mind. A *roué* ! Could it be so ! Could it be possible ! Was she, while she had pledged the freshness of her virgin mind to this unknown man was she, after all, only a fresh sacrifice to his insatiable vanity ! Ferrers a *roué* ! That lofty-minded man, who spoke so eloquently and so wisely, was he a *roué*, an eccentric *roué*, one whose unprincipled conduct could only be excused at the expense of the soundness of his intellect ? She could not credit it ; she would not credit it . and yet his conduct had been so strange, so mysterious, so unnecessarily mysterious . and then she recollected his last dark-muttered words : ‘ *You may hear of me, and not to my advantage.*’ Oh, what a prophecy ! And *from* him she had never heard. He had, at least, kept this sad promise. Very sorrowful was the Consul’s daughter. And then she bethought herself of his pledge, and his honour that had been *never sullied*. She buried her face in her hands, she conjured up to her recollection all that had happened since his arrival, perhaps his fatal arrival, in their island ; all he had said and done, and seemed to think She would not doubt him. It was madness for a moment to doubt him. No desolation seemed so complete, no misery so full of anguish, as such suspicion : she could not doubt him ; all her happiness was hope. A gentle touch roused her. It was her gazelle ; the gazelle that he had so loved. She caressed it, she caressed it for his sake . she arose and joined her father and Lord Bohun in the garden, if not light-hearted, at least serene.

Chapter VII

There must have been something peculiarly captivating in the air of our island ; for Lord Bohun, who, according to his own account, had never remained in any place a week in the whole course of his life, exhibited no inclination

to quit the city where Major Ponsonby presided over the interests of our commerce. He had remained there nearly a month, made himself very agreeable, and, on the whole, was a welcome guest, certainly with the Consul, if not with the Consul's daughter. As for the name of Mr. Ferrers, it occasionally occurred in conversation. Henrietta piqued herself upon the unsuspected inquiries which she carried on respecting her absent friend. She, however, did not succeed in eliciting much information. Lord Bohun was so vague, that it was impossible to annex a precise idea to anything he ever uttered. Whether Ferrers were rich or poor, really of good family, or, as she sometimes thought, of disgraceful lineage; when and where Lord Bohun and himself had been fellow-travellers all was alike obscure and shadowy. Not that her noble guest was inattentive to her inquiries; on the contrary, he almost annoyed her by his constant devotion: she was almost, indeed, inclined to resent his singularly marked expressions of admiration as an insult, when, to her utter astonishment, one morning her father astounded her by an announcement that Lord Bohun had done her the honour of offering her his hand and heart. The beautiful Henrietta was in great perplexity. It was due to Lord Bohun to reject his flattering proposal without reservation. it was difficult, almost impossible, to convince her father of the expediency of such a proceeding. There was in the proposal of Lord Bohun every circumstance which could gratify Major Ponsonby. In the wildest dreams of his paternal ambition, his hopes had never soared higher than the possession of such a son-in-law: high birth, high rank, splendid fortune, and accomplished youth, were combined in the individual whom some favouring destiny, it would seem, had wafted to this distant and obscure isle to offer his vows to its accomplished mistress. That his daughter might hesitate, on so brief an acquaintance, to unite her eternal lot in life with a comparative stranger, was what he had in some degree anticipated;

but that she should unhesitatingly and unreservedly decline the proposal, was conduct for which he was totally unprepared. He was disappointed and mortified for the first time in his life he was angry with his child. It is strange that Lord Bohun, who had required a deputy to make a proposition which, of all others, the most becomes and most requires a principal, should, when his fate was decided, have requested a personal interview with Miss Ponsonby. It was a favour which she could not refuse, for her father required her to grant it. She accordingly prepared herself for a repetition of the proposal from lips, doubtless, unaccustomed to sue in vain. It was otherwise : never had Lord Bohun conducted himself in a more kind and unaffected manner than during this interview : it pained Miss Ponsonby to think she had pained one who was in reality so amiable : she was glad, however, to observe that he did not appear very much moved or annoyed. Lord Bohun expressed his gratitude for the agreeable hours he had spent in her society, and then most delicately ventured to inquire whether time might, perhaps, influence Miss Ponsonby's determination ? And when he had received her most courteous, though hopeless answer, he only expressed his wishes for her future happiness, which he could not doubt

‘ I feel,’ said Lord Bohun, as he was about to depart, ‘ I feel,’ he said, in a very hesitating voice, ‘ I am taking a great, an unwarrantable liberty ; but believe me, dear Miss Ponsonby, the inquiry, if I could venture to make it, is inspired by the sincerest desire for your well-fare. . . ’

‘ Speak with freedom, Lord Bohun, you will ever, I am sure, speak with kindness ’

‘ I would not willingly despair, then, unless I believed that heart were engaged to another.’

Miss Ponsonby bent down and plucked a flower, and, her brow covered with blushes, with an agitated hand tore the flower to pieces.

‘ Is this a fair inquiry ? ’ she murmured.

‘ It is for your sake I inquire,’ answered Lord Bohun

Now an irresistible conviction came over her mind that Lord Bohun was thinking of Ferrers, and a desire on her part as strong to learn at length something of her mysterious lover.

‘ What, indeed, if I be not mistress of my heart ? ’ She spoke without raising her head.

‘ In that case I will believe that it belongs to one worthy of such a treasure.’

‘ You speak of Edmund Ferrers ? ’ said Miss Ponsonby.

‘ The same.’

‘ You know him ? ’ she inquired, in a choking voice

‘ I know and honour him. I have long believed that the world did not boast a man more gifted ; now I know that it does not possess a man more blessed.’

‘ Shall you see him ? ’ she inquired, in a quick tone

‘ Probably you will see him first, I am sufficiently acquainted with his movements to know that he will soon be here. This Greek boy whom you have sometimes noticed is his page, I wish him to join his master again ; and methinks the readiest way will be to leave him in this isle. Here, Spiridion, bow to your new mistress, and be dutiful for her sake, as well as that of your lord’s. Adieu ! dearest Miss Ponsonby ! ’

Chapter VIII

This strange conversation with Lord Bohun at parting was not without a certain wild, but not unpleasant influence over the mind of Henrietta Ponsonby. Much as it at first had agitated her, its result, as she often mused over it, was far from being without solace. It was consoling, indeed, to know that one person, at least, honoured that being in whom she had so implicitly relied : Lord Bohun, also,

had before spoken of Ferrers in a very different tone, but she felt confidence in the unusual seriousness of his last communication; and with satisfaction contrasted it with the heedlessness, or the levity, of his former intimations. Here, too, was the page of Ferrers at her side the beautiful and bright-eyed Spiridion. How strange it was! how very strange! Her simple life had suddenly become like some shifting fairy-tale, but love, indeed, is a fairy, and full of marvels and magic it changes all things; and the quietest domestic hearth, when shadowed by its wing, becomes as rife with wonders and adventure as if it were the passionate theatre of some old romance. Yes! the bright-eyed Greek page of her mysterious and absent lover was at her side but then he only spoke Greek. In vain she tried to make him comprehend how much she desired to have tidings of his master. The graceful mute could only indulge in airy pantomime, point to the skies and ocean, or press his hand to his heart in token of fidelity. Henrietta amused herself in teaching Spiridion Italian, and repaid herself for all her trouble in occasionally obtaining some slight information of her friend. In time she learned that Ferrers was in Italy, and had seen Lord Bohun before the departure of that nobleman. In answer to her anxious and often-repeated inquiries whether he would soon return, Spiridion was constant to his consoling affirmative. Never was such a sedulous mistress of languages as Henrietta Ponsonby. She learned, also, that an Albanian scarf, which the page wore round his waist, had been given him by his master when Spiridion quitted him; and Henrietta instantly obtained the scarf for a Barbary shawl of uncommon splendour.

Now, it happened one afternoon towards sunset, as the Greek page, rambling, as was his custom, over the neighbouring heights, beheld below the spreading fort, the neighbouring straits, and the distant sea, that a vessel appeared in sight, and soon entered the harbour. It was

an English vessel it was the yacht of Lord Bohun. The page started and watched the vessel with a fixed and earnest gaze ; soon he observed the British Consul in his boat row to the side of the vessel, and almost immediately return. At that moment the yacht hoisted a signal upon a white ground a crimson heart whereupon Spiridion, drawing from his breast a letter, kissed it twice, and bounded away.

He bounded away towards the city, and scarcely slackened his pace until he arrived at the Consul's mansion he rushed in, dashed up the staircase, and entered the saloons. At the window of one, gazing on the sunset, was Henrietta Ponsonby her gaze was serious, but her beautiful countenance was rather tinged by melancholy than touched by gloom pensive, not sorrowful By her side lay her guitar, still echoing, as it were, with her touch, and near it the Albanian scarf, on which she had embroidered the name of her beloved Of him, then, were her gentle musings ? Who can doubt it ? Her gentle musings were of him whom she had loved with such unexampled trust. Fond, beautiful confiding maiden ! It was the strength of thy mind as much as the simplicity of thy heart that rendered thee so faithful and so firm ! Who would not envy thy unknown adorer ? Can he be false ? Suspicion is for weak minds and cold-blooded spirits. Thou never didst doubt ; and thou wast just, for, behold, he is true !

A fluttering sound roused her she turned her head, and expected to see her gazelle it was Spiridion ; his face was wreathed with smiles as he held towards her a letter. She seized it she recognised in an instant the handwriting she had so often studied it was his ! Yes ! it was his It was the handwriting of her beloved Her face was pale, her hand trembled, a cloud moved before her vision, yet at length she read, and she read these words

‘ If, as I hope, and as I believe, you are faithful to

those vows, which since my departure have been my only consolation, you will meet me to-morrow, two hours before noon, in our garden. I come to claim my bride ; but until my lips have expressed to you how much I adore you, let nothing be known to our father.'

Chapter IX

'My dearest Henrietta,' said the Consul as he entered, 'who, think you, has returned ? Lord Bohun.'

'Indeed !' said Henrietta. 'Have you seen him ?'

'No. I paid my respects to him immediately, but he was unwell. He breakfasts with us to-morrow, at ten.'

The morrow came, but ten o'clock brought no Lord Bohun ; and even eleven sounded : the Consul sought his daughter to consult her he was surprised to learn that Miss Ponsonby had not returned from her early ramble. At this moment a messenger arrived from the yacht to say that, from some error, Lord Bohun had repaired to the casino, where he awaited the Consul. The major mounted his barb, and soon reached the pavilion. As he entered the garden, he beheld, in the distance, his daughter and Mr. Ferrers. He was, indeed, surprised. It appeared that Henrietta was about to run forward to him ; but her companion checked her, and she disappeared down a neighbouring walk. Mr. Ferrers advanced, and saluted her father

'You are surprised to see me, my dear sir ?'

'I am surprised, but most happy. You came, of course, with Lord Bohun ?'

Mr. Ferrers bowed.

'I am very desirous of having some conversation with you, my dear Major Ponsonby,' continued Mr. Ferrers.

'I am ever at your service, my dearest sir, but at the present moment I must go and greet his lordship.'

‘Oh, never mind Bohun,’ said Mr. Ferrers, carelessly.
 ‘I have no ceremony with him—he can wait.’

The major was a little perplexed.

‘You must know, my dearest sir,’ continued Mr. Ferrers,
 ‘that I wish to speak to you on a subject in which my
 happiness is entirely concerned.’

‘Proceed, sir,’ said the Consul, looking still more puzzled.

‘You can scarcely be astonished, my dearest sir, that
 I should admire your daughter.’

The Consul bowed

‘Indeed,’ said Mr. Ferrers; ‘it seems to me impossible
 to know her and not admire—I should say, adore her.’

‘You flatter a father’s feelings,’ said the Consul

‘I express my own,’ replied Mr. Ferrers. ‘I love her
 I have long loved her devotedly.’

‘Hem!’ said Major Ponsonby.

‘I feel,’ continued Mr. F., ‘that there is a great deal
 to apologise for in my conduct, both towards you and
 herself. I feel that my conduct may, in some degree, be
 considered even unpardonable. I will not say that the
 end justifies the means, Major Ponsonby, but my end was,
 at least, a great, and, I am sure, a virtuous one.’

‘I do not clearly comprehend you, Mr. Ferrers.’

‘It is some consolation to me,’ continued that gentleman,
 ‘that the daughter has pardoned me: now let me indulge
 the delightful hope that I may be as successful with the
 father’

‘I will, at least, listen with patience to you, Mr. Ferrers;
 but I must own your meaning is not very evident to me
 let me, at least, go and shake hands with Lord Bohun.’

‘I will answer for Lord Bohun excusing your momentary
 neglect. Pray, my dear sir, listen to me.’

‘I wish to make you acquainted, Major Ponsonby, with
 the feelings which influenced me when I first landed on this
 island. This knowledge is necessary for my justification.’

‘But what is there to justify?’ inquired the major.

‘Conceive a man born to a great fortune,’ continued Mr. F., without noticing the interruption, ‘and to some accidents of life, which many esteem above fortune; a station as eminent as his wealth conceive this man master of his destiny from his boyhood, and early experience in that great world with which you are not unacquainted conceive him with a heart, gifted, perhaps, with too dangerous a sensibility; the dupe and the victim of all whom he encounters conceive him, in disgust, flying from the world that has deceived him, and divesting himself of those accidents of existence which, however envied by others, appeared to his morbid imagination the essential causes of his misery conceive this man, unknown and obscure, sighing to be valued for those qualities of which fortune could not deprive him, and to be loved only for his sake a miserable man, sir!’

‘It would seem so,’ said the Consul.

‘Now, then, for a moment imagine this man apparently in possession of all for which he had so long panted; he is loved, he is loved for himself, and loved by a being surpassing the brightest dream of his purest youth: yet the remembrance of the past poisons, even now, his joy. He is haunted by the suspicion that the affection, even of this being, is less the result of his own qualities, than of her inexperience of life he has everything at stake he dares to submit her devotion to the sharpest trial he quits her without withdrawing the dark curtain with which he had enveloped himself he quits her with the distinct understanding that she shall not even hear from him until he thinks fit to return, and entangles her pure mind, for the first time, in a secret from the parent whom she adores. He is careful, in the meanwhile, that his name shall be traduced in her presence that the proudest fortune, the loftiest rank, shall be offered for her acceptance, if she only will renounce him, and the dim hope of his return. A terrible trial, Major Ponsonby!’

‘ Indeed, most terrible ’

‘ But she is true truer even than truth and I have come back to claim my unrivalled bride. Can you pardon me ? Can you sympathise with me ? ’

‘ I speak, then ’ murmured the astounded Consul

‘ To your son, with your permission to LORD BOHUN ! ’



WALSTEIN; OR A CURE FOR
MELANCHOLY

WALSTEIN; OR A CURE FOR MELANCHOLY

Chapter I

A PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERSATION BETWEEN A PHYSICIAN AND HIS PATIENT

DR. DE SCHULEMBOURG was the most eminent physician in Dresden. He was not only a physician ; he was a philosopher. He studied the idiosyncrasy of his patients, and was aware of the fine and secret connection between medicine and morals. One morning Dr. de Schulembourg was summoned to Walstem. The physician looked forward to the interview with his patient with some degree of interest. He had often heard of Walstein, but had never yet met that gentleman, who had only recently returned from his travels, and who had been absent from his country for several years.

When Dr. de Schulembourg arrived at the house of Walstem, he was admitted into a circular hall containing the busts of the Cæsars, and ascending a double staircase of noble proportion, was ushered into a magnificent gallery. Copies in marble of the most celebrated ancient statues were ranged on each side of this gallery. Above them were suspended many beautiful Italian and Spanish pictures, and between them were dwarf bookcases full of tall volumes in sumptuous bindings, and crowned with Etruscan vases and

rare bronzes. Schulembourg, who was a man of taste, looked around him with great satisfaction. And while he was gazing on a group of diaphanous cherubim, by Murillo, an artist of whom he had heard much and knew little, his arm was gently touched, and turning round, Schulembourg beheld his patient, a man past the prime of youth, but of very distinguished appearance, and with a very frank and graceful manner. 'I hope you will pardon me, my dear sir, for permitting you to be a moment alone,' said Walstein, with an ingratiating smile.

'Solitude, in such a scene, is not very wearisome,' replied the physician. 'There are great changes in this mansion since the time of your father, Mr. Walstein.'

'Tis an attempt to achieve that which we are all sighing for,' replied Walstein, 'the Ideal. But for myself, although I assure you not a pococurante, I cannot help thinking there is no slight dash of the common-place.'

'Which is a necessary ingredient of all that is excellent,' replied Schulembourg.

Walstein shrugged his shoulders, and then invited the physician to be seated. 'I wish to consult you, Dr Schulembourg,' he observed, somewhat abruptly. 'My metaphysical opinions induce me to believe that a physician is the only philosopher. I am perplexed by my own case. I am in excellent health, my appetite is good, my digestion perfect. My temperament I have ever considered to be of a very sanguine character. I have nothing upon my mind. I am in very easy circumstances. Hitherto I have only committed blunders in life and never crimes. Nevertheless, I have, of late, become the victim of a deep and inscrutable melancholy, which I can ascribe to no cause, and can divert by no resource. Can you throw any light upon my dark feelings? Can you remove them?'

'How long have you experienced them?' inquired the physician.

‘More or less ever since my return,’ replied Walstein ;
 ‘but most grievously during the last three months.’

‘Are you in love ?’ inquired Schulembourg.

‘Certainly not,’ replied Walstein, ‘and I fear I never shall be.’

‘You have been ?’ inquired the physician

‘I have had some fancies, perhaps too many,’ answered the patient ; ‘but youth deludes itself. My idea of a heroine has never been realised, and, in all probability, never will be.’

‘Besides an idea of a heroine,’ said Schulembourg, ‘you have also, if I mistake not, an idea of a hero ?’

‘Without doubt.’ replied Walstein. ‘I have pre-conceived for myself a character which I have never achieved.’

‘Yet, if you have never met a heroine nearer your ideal than your hero, why should you complain ?’ rejoined Schulembourg.

‘There are moments when my vanity completes my own portrait,’ said Walstein.

‘And there are moments when our imagination completes the portrait of our mistress.’ rejoined Schulembourg.

‘You reason,’ said Walstein ‘I was myself once fond of reasoning, but the greater my experience, the more I have become convinced that man is not a rational animal. He is only truly good or great when he acts from passion.’

‘Passion is the ship, and reason is the rudder’ observed Schulembourg.

‘And thus we pass the ocean of life,’ said Walstein.
 ‘Would that I could discover a new continent of sensation !’

‘Do you mix much in society ?’ said the physician.

‘By fits and starts,’ said Walstein. ‘A great deal when I first returned : of late little.’

‘And your distemper has increased in proportion with your solitude ?’

‘It would superficially appear so,’ observed Walstein ;

‘but I consider my present distemper as not so much the result of solitude, as the reaction of much converse with society. I am gloomy at present from a sense of disappointment of the past.’

‘You are disappointed,’ observed Schulembourg. ‘What, then, did you expect?’

‘I do not know,’ replied Walstein; ‘that is the very thing I wish to discover.’

‘How do you in general pass your time?’ inquired the physician.

‘When I reply *in doing nothing*, my dear Doctor,’ said Walstein, ‘you will think that you have discovered the cause of my disorder. But perhaps you will only mistake an effect for a cause.’

‘Do you read?’

‘I have lost the faculty of reading. early in life I was a student, but books become insipid when one is rich with the wisdom of a wandering life.’

‘Do you write?’

‘I have tried, but mediocrity disgusts me. In literature a second-rate reputation is no recompense for the evils that authors are heirs to.’

‘Yet, without making your compositions public, you might relieve your own feelings in expressing them. There is a charm in creation.’

‘My sympathies are strong,’ replied Walstein. ‘In an evil hour I might descend from my pedestal, I should compromise my dignity with the herd, I should sink before the first shaft of ridicule.’

‘You did not suffer from this melancholy when travelling?’

‘Occasionally but the fits were never so profound, and were very evanescent.’

‘Travel is action,’ replied Schulembourg. ‘Believe me, that in action you can alone find a cure.’

‘What is action?’ inquired Walstein. ‘Travel I have

exhausted. The world is quiet. There are no wars now, no revolutions. Where can I find a career ? ’

‘ Action,’ replied Schulembourg, ‘ is the exercise of our faculties. Do not mistake restlessness for action. Murillo, who passed a long life almost within the walls of his native city, was a man of great action. Witness the convents and the churches that are covered with his exploits. A great student is a great actor, and as great as a marshal or a statesman. You must act, Mr. Walstein, you must act ; you must have an object in life ; great or slight, still you must have an object. Believe me, it is better to be a mere man of pleasure than a dreamer.’

‘ Your advice is profound,’ replied Walstein, ‘ and you have struck upon a sympathetic chord. But what am I to do ? I have no object.’

‘ You are a very ambitious man,’ replied the physician.

‘ How know you that ? ’ said Walstein, somewhat hastily, and slightly blushing.

‘ We doctors know many strange things,’ replied Schulembourg, with a smile. ‘ Come now, would you like to be prime minister of Saxony ? ’

‘ Prime minister of Oberon ! ’ said Walstein, laughing ; ‘ ’tis indeed a great destiny.’

‘ Ah ! when you have lived longer among us, your views will accommodate themselves to our limited horizon. In the meantime, I will write you a prescription, provided you promise to comply with my directions.’

‘ Do not doubt me, my dear Doctor.’

Schulembourg seated himself at the table, and wrote a few lines, which he handed to his patient.

Walstein smiled as he read the prescription :

‘ Dr. de Schulembourg requests the honour of the Baron de Walstein’s company at dinner, to-morrow at two o’clock.’

Walstein smiled and looked a little perplexed, but he remembered his promise. ‘ I shall, with pleasure, become your guest, Doctor.’

Chapter II

CONTAINING SOME FUTURE CONVERSATION

Walstein did not forget his engagement with his friendly physician. The house of Schulembourg was the most beautiful mansion in Dresden. It was situated in a delicious garden in the midst of the park, and had been presented to him by a grateful sovereign. It was a Palladian villa, which recalled the Brenda to the recollection of Walstein, flights of marble steps, airy colonnades, pediments of harmonious proportion, and all painted with classic frescos. Orange trees clustered in groups upon the terrace, perfumed the summer air, rising out of magnificent vases sculptured in high relief, and amid the trees, confined by silver chains, were rare birds of radiant plumage, rare birds with prismatic eyes and bold ebony beaks, breasts flooded with crimson, and long tails of violet and green. The declining sun shone brightly in the light blue sky, and threw its lustre upon the fanciful abode, above which, slight and serene, floated the airy crescent of the young white moon.

‘My friend, too. I perceive, is a votary of the Ideal,’ exclaimed Walstein.

The carriage stopped. Walstein mounted the marble steps and was ushered through a hall, wherein was the statue of a single nymph, into an octagonal apartment. Schulembourg himself had not arrived. Two men moved away, as he was announced, from a lady whom they surrounded. The lady was Madame de Schulembourg, and she came forward, with infinite grace, to apologise for the absence of her husband, and to welcome her guest.

Her appearance was very remarkable. She was young and strangely beautiful. Walstein thought that he had never beheld such lustrous locks of ebony hair shading a

countenance of such dazzling purity. Her large and deep blue eyes gleamed through their long black lashes. The expression of her face was singularly joyous. Two wild dimples played like meteors on her soft round cheeks. A pink veil worn over her head was carelessly tied under her chin, and fastened with a white rose of pearls. Her vest and train of white satin did not conceal her sylph-like form and delicate feet. She held forth a little white hand to Walstein, adorned only by a single enormous ruby, and welcomed him with inspiring ease.

‘I do not know whether you are acquainted with your companions, Mr. Walstein,’ said Madame de Schulembourg. Walstein looked around and recognised the English minister, and had the pleasure of being introduced, for the first time, to a celebrated sculptor.

‘I have heard of your name, not only in Germany,’ said Walstein, addressing the latter gentleman. ‘You have left your fame behind you at Rome. If the Italians are excusably envious, their envy is at least accompanied with admiration.’ The gratified sculptor bowed and slightly blushed. Walstein loved art and artists. He was not one of those frigid, petty souls who are ashamed to evince feeling in society. He felt keenly and expressed himself without reserve. But nature had invested him with a true nobility of manner as well as of mind. He was ever graceful, even when enthusiastic.

‘It is difficult to remember we are in the North,’ said Walstein to Madame Schulembourg, ‘amid these colonnades and orange trees.’

‘It is thus that I console myself for beautiful Italy,’ replied the lady, ‘and, indeed, to-day the sun favours the design.’

‘You have resided long in Italy?’ inquired Walstein.

‘I was born at Milan,’ replied Madame de Schulembourg, ‘my father commanded a Hungarian regiment in garrison.’

‘I thought that I did not recognise an Italian physiog-

‘nomy,’ said Walstein, looking somewhat earnestly at the lady

‘Yet I have a dash of the Lombard blood in me, I assure you,’ replied Madame de Schulembourg, smiling; ‘is it not so, Mr Revel?’

The Englishman advanced and praised the beauty of the lady’s mother, whom he well knew. Then he asked Walstein when he was at Milan, then they exchanged more words respecting Milanese society; and while they were conversing, the Doctor entered, followed by a servant. ‘I must compensate for keeping you from dinner,’ said their host, ‘by having the pleasure of announcing that it is prepared’

He welcomed Walstein with warmth. Mr. Revel led Madame to the dining-room. The table was round, and Walstein seated himself at her side.

The repast was light and elegant, unusual characteristics of a German dinner. Madame de Schulembourg conversed with infinite gaiety, but with an ease that showed that to charm was with her no effort. The Englishman was an excellent specimen of his nation, polished and intelligent, without that haughty and graceless reserve which is so painful to a finished man of the world. The host was himself ever animated and cheerful, but calm and clear and often addressed himself to the artist, who was silent, and, like students in general, constrained. Walstein himself, indeed, was not very talkative, but his manner indicated that he was interested, and when he made an observation it was uttered with facility, and arrested attention by its justness or its novelty. It was an agreeable party.

They had discussed several light topics. At length they diverged to the supernatural. Mr. Revel, as is customary with Englishmen, who are very sceptical, affected for the moment a belief in spirits. With the rest of the society, however, it was no light theme. Madame de Schulembourg avowed her profound credulity. The artist was a decided

votary. Schulembourg philosophically accounted for many appearances, but he was a magnetiser, and his explanations were more marvellous than the portents.

‘And you, Mr. Walstein,’ said Madame de Schulembourg, ‘what is your opinion?’

‘I am willing to yield to any faith that distracts my thoughts from the burthen of daily reality,’ replied Walstein.

‘You would just suit Mr. Novalis, then,’ observed Mr. Revel, bowing to the sculptor.

‘Novalis is an astrologer,’ said Madame Schulembourg; ‘I think he would just suit you.’

‘Destiny is a grand subject,’ observed Walstein, ‘and although I am not prepared to say that I believe in fate, I should nevertheless not be surprised to read my fortunes in the stars.’

‘That has been the belief of great spirits,’ observed the sculptor, his countenance brightening with more assurance.

‘It is true,’ replied Walstein, ‘I would rather err with my great namesake and Napolcon than share the orthodoxy of ordinary mortality’

‘That is a dangerous speech, Baron,’ said Schulembourg.

‘With regard to destiny,’ said Mr. Revel, who was in fact a materialist of the old school, ‘everything depends upon a man’s nature; the ambitious will rise, and the grovelling will crawl those whose volition is strong will believe in fate, and the weak-minded accounts for the consequences of his own incongruities by execrating chance’

Schulembourg shook his head. ‘By a man’s nature you mean his structure,’ said the physician, ‘much, doubtless, depends upon structure, but structure is again influenced by structure. All is subservient to sympathy.’

‘It is true,’ replied the sculptor; ‘and what is the influence of the stars on human conduct but sympathy of the highest degree?’

‘I am little accustomed to metaphysical discussions,’

remarked Walstem ; ‘ this is, indeed, a sorry subject to amuse a fair lady with, Madame de Schulembourg.’

‘ On the contrary,’ she replied, ‘ the mystical ever delights me.’

‘ Yet,’ continued Walstem, ‘ perceiving that the discontent and infelicity of man generally increase in an exact ratio with his intelligence and his knowledge, I am often tempted to envy the ignorant and the simple.’

‘ A man can only be content,’ replied Schulembourg, ‘ when his career is in harmony with his organisation. Man is an animal formed for great physical activity, and this is the reason why the vast majority, in spite of great physical suffering, are content. The sense of existence, under the influence of the action which is necessary to their living, counterbalances all misery. But when a man has a peculiar structure, when he is born with a predisposition, or is, in vulgar language, a man of genius, his content entirely depends upon the predisposition being developed and indulged. And this is philosophical education, that sublime art so ill comprehended !’

‘ I agree with you,’ said Revel, who recollected the nonsense-verses of Eton, and the logic of Christ Church ; ‘ all the scrapes and unhappiness of my youth, and I assure you they were not inconsiderable, are to be ascribed to the obstinate resolution of my family to make a priest out of a man who wished to be a soldier.’

‘ And I was disinherited because I would be a physician,’ replied Schulembourg, ‘ but instead of a poor insignificant baron, I am now a noble in four kingdoms and have the orders of all Europe, and that lady there was not ashamed to marry me.’

‘ I was a swineherd in the wilds of Pomerania,’ said Novahs, his eyes flashing with enthusiasm. ‘ I ran away to Italy, but I broke my poor mother’s heart.’

There was a dead, painful pause, in which Walstem interposed ‘ As for myself, I suppose I have no pre-

disposition, or I have not found it out. Perhaps nature intended me for a swineherd, instead of a baron. This, however, I do know, that life is an intolerable burthen at least it would be,' he added, turning with a smile to his fair hostess, 'were it not for occasionally meeting some one so inspiring as you.'

'Come,' said Madame, rising, 'the carriages are at the door. Let us take a drive. Mr. Walstein, you shall give me your opinion of my ponies.'

Chapter III

CONTAINING A DRIVE IN THE PARK WITH A VERY
CHARMING LADY

Madame de Schulembourg's carriage, drawn by two beautiful Hanoverian ponies, cream in colour, with long manes and tails, like floss silk, was followed by a britshka, but despatches called away Mr. Revel, and Novalis stole off to his studio. The doctor, as usual, was engaged. 'Caroline,' he said, as he bid his guest adieu, 'I commend Mr. Walstein to your care. When I return in the evening, do not let me find that our friend has escaped.'

'I am sure though unhappy he is not ungallant,' replied Caroline, with a smile; and she took his offered arm, and ascended her seat.

Swiftly the little ponies scudded along the winding roads. The Corso was as yet but slightly attended. Caroline passed through the wide avenue without stopping, but sometimes recognising with bow and smile a fitting friend. They came to a wilder and woodier part of the park, the road lined on each side with linden trees, and in the distance vast beds of tall fern, tinged with the first rich hues of autumn.

'Here, Mr Walstein,' said Caroline, 'with your permission I shall take my afternoon walk.' Thus speaking, she

stopped the carriage, which she and her companion quitted. Walstem offered her his arm, but she declined it, folding herself up in her shawl.

‘Which do you like best, Mr. Walstem, Constantinople or Dresden?’ said Madame de Schulembourg.

‘At this moment decidedly Dresden,’ replied her companion.

‘Ah! that is a compliment,’ said Madame de Schulembourg, after a moment’s musing ‘My dear Mr. Walstem,’ she continued, looking up with an arch expression, ‘never pay me compliments.’

‘You mistake me: it was not a compliment,’ replied Walstem. ‘It was a sincere and becoming tribute of gratitude for three hours of endurable existence.’

‘You know that you are my patient,’ rejoined Madame de Schulembourg. ‘I have orders to cure your melancholy. I am very successful in such complaints’

‘I have no doubt of it,’ replied Walstem. with a slight bow.

‘If we could but find out the cause!’ continued Caroline. ‘I venture to believe that, after all, it will turn out an affair of the heart. Come, be frank with your physician. Tell me, have you left it captive with a fair Greek of the Isles, or a dark-eyed maiden of the Nile? Is our heroine a captive behind a Spanish jealousy, or in an Italian convent?’

‘Women ever believe that all moods and tempers of man are consequences of their influence,’ replied Walstem, ‘and in general they are right’

‘But in your case?’

‘Very wrong’

‘I am determined to find it out,’ said Madame de Schulembourg.

‘I wish to heaven you could,’ said Monsieur de Walstem.

‘I think a wandering life has spoiled you,’ said Caroline

‘I think it must be civilisation that you find wearisome.’

‘That would be very sublime,’ replied Walstem. ‘But I assure you, if there be one thing that disgusts me more than another, it is the anticipation of renewed travel! I have seen all that I wish, and more than I ever expected. All that I could experience now would be exertion without excitement, a dreadful doom. If I am not to experience pleasure, let me at least have the refuge of repose. The magic of change of scene is with me exhausted. If I am to live, I do not think that I could be tempted to quit this city; sometimes. I think, scarcely even my house.’

‘I see how it is,’ exclaimed Madame de Schulembourg, shaking her head very knowingly, ‘you must marry.’

‘The last resource of feminine fancy!’ exclaimed Walstem, almost laughing. ‘You would lessen my melancholy, I suppose, on the principle of the division of gloom. I can assure you, my dear Madame de Schulembourg,’ he continued, in a very serious tone, ‘that, with my present sensations, I should consider it highly dishonourable to implicate any woman in my destiny.’

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ laughed Madame; ‘I can assure you, my dear Mr. Walstem, that I have a great many very pretty friends who will run the risk. ’Tis the best cure for melancholy, believe me. I was serious myself at times before I married, but you see I have got over my gloom.’

‘You have, indeed,’ said Walstem; ‘and perhaps, were I Dr. de Schulembourg, I might be as gay.’

‘Another compliment! However, I accept it, because it is founded on truth. The fact is, I think you are too much alone.’

‘I have lived in a desert, and now I live in what is called the world,’ replied Walstem. ‘Yet in Arabia I was fairly content, and now I am what I shall not describe, because it will only procure me your ridicule.’

‘Nay! not ridicule,’ Mr. Walstem. ‘Do not think that I do not sympathise with your affliction, because I wish

you to be as cheerful as myself. If you were fairly content in Arabia, I shall begin to consider it an affair of climate.'

'No,' said Walstein, still very serious, 'not an affair of climate certainly not. The truth is, travel is a preparation, and we bear with its yoke as we do with all that is initiatory with the solace of expectation. But my preparation can lead to nothing, and there appear to be no mysteries in which I am to be initiated.'

'Then, after all, you want something to do?'

'No doubt.'

'What shall it be?' inquired Madame de Schulembourg, with a thoughtful air.

'Ah! what shall it be?' echoed Walstein, in accents of despondence; 'or, rather, what can it be? What can be more tame, more uninteresting, more unpromising than all around? Where is there a career?'

'A career!' exclaimed Caroline. 'What, you want to set the world in a blaze! I thought you were a poetic dreamer, a listless, superfine speculator of an exhausted world. And all the time you are very ambitious!'

'I know not what I am,' replied Walstein, 'but I feel that my present lot is an intolerable burthen.'

'But what can you desire? You have wealth, youth, and station, all the accidents of fortune which nature can bestow, and all for which men struggle. Believe me, you are born to enjoy yourself, nor do I see that you require any other career than the duties of your position. Believe me, my dear Mr Walstein, life is a great business, and quite enough to employ any man's faculties.'

'My youth is fast fading, which I don't regret,' replied Walstein, 'for I am not an admirer of youth. As for station, I attribute no magic to it, and wealth I only value because knowing from experience its capacity of producing pleasure; were I a beggar to-morrow, I should be haunted by no uneasy sensations. Pardon me, Madame de Schulembourg, your philosophy does not appear to be that of my

friend, the Doctor. We were told this afternoon that, to produce happiness, the nature of a being and his career must coincide. Now, what can wealth and station produce of happiness to me, if I have the mind of a bandit, or, perhaps even of a mechanic ?

‘ You must settle all this with Augustus,’ replied Madame de Schulembourg : ‘ I am glad, however, to hear you abuse youth. I always tell Sidonia that he makes his heroes too young, which enrages him beyond description. Do you know him ?’

‘ Only by fame.’

‘ He would suit you. He is melancholy too, but only by fits. Would you like to make his acquaintance ?’

‘ Authors are best known by their writings,’ replied Walstein : ‘ I admire him, because amid much wildness, he is a great reader of the human heart, and I find many echoes in his pages of what I dare only to think and to utter in solitude.’

‘ I shall introduce you to him. He is exceedingly vain, and likes to make the acquaintance of an admirer.’

‘ I entreat you not,’ replied Walstein, really alarmed. ‘ It is precisely because I admire him very much that I never wish to see him. What can the conversation of Sidonia be compared with his writings ? His appearance and his manner will only destroy the ideal in which it is always interesting to indulge.’

‘ Well, be not alarmed ! He is not now in Dresden. He has been leading a wild life for some time in our Saxon Switzerland, in a state of despair. I am the unhappy nymph who occasions his present desperation,’ continued Madame de Schulembourg, with a smile. ‘ Do not think me heartless ; all his passion is imagination. Change of scene ever cures him, he has written to me every week his letters are each time more reasonable. I have no doubt he has by this time relieved his mind in some mad work which will amuse us all very much, and will return

again to Dresden quite cool. I delight in Sidonia- he is my especial favourite.'

After some little time the companions re-entered the carriage. The public drive was now full of sparkling equipages. Madame de Schulembourg gaily bowed, as she passed along, to many a beautiful friend

'Dear girls, come home with us this eve,' she exclaimed, as she curbed her ponies by the side of an open carriage, and addressed two young ladies who were seated within it with their mother. 'Let me introduce Mr. Walstem to you Madame de Manheim, the Misses de Manheim, otherwise Augusta and Amelia. Ask any of our friends whom you pass. There is Emilius How do you do? Count Voyna, come home with us, and bring your Bavarian friend.'

'How is Sidonia, Madame de Schulembourg?' inquired Augusta.

'Oh, quite mad. He will not be sane this week. There is his last letter; read it, and return it to me when we meet. Adieu, Madame de Manheim, adieu, dear girls, do not stay long adieu, adieu.' So they drove away.



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A TRUE STORY



A TRUE STORY*

SIR, When I was a young boy, I had delicate health, and was somewhat of a pensive and contemplative turn of mind; it was my delight in the long summer evenings to slip away from my noisy and more robust companions, that I might walk in the shade of a venerable wood, my favourite haunt, and listen to the cawing of the old rooks, who seemed as fond of this retreat as I was

One evening I sat later than usual, though the distant sound of the cathedral clock had more than once warned me to my home. There was a stillness in all nature that I was unwilling to disturb by the least motion. From this reverie I was suddenly startled by the sight of a tall, slender female who was standing by me, looking sorrowfully and steadily in my face. She was dressed in white, from head to foot, in a fashion I had never seen before, her garments were unusually long and flowing, and rustled as she glided through the low shrubs near me as if they were made of the richest silk. My heart beat as if I were dying, and I knew not that I could have stirred from the spot, but she seemed so very mild and beautiful, I did not attempt it. Her pale brown hair was braided round her head, but there were some locks that strayed upon her neck, and altogether she looked like a lovely picture, but not like a

* This short tale appeared in the number of Leigh Hunt's *Indicator*, published 12th July 1820, when the author was in his fifteenth year

living woman. I closed my eyes forcibly with my hands, and when I looked again she had vanished.

I cannot exactly say why I did not on my return speak of this beautiful appearance, nor why, with a strange mixture of hope and fear, I went again and again to the same spot that I might see her. She always came, and often in the storm and plashing rain, that never seemed to touch or to annoy her, and looked sweetly at me, and silently passed on; and though she was so near to me, that once the wind lifted these light straying locks, and I felt them against my cheek, yet I never could move or speak to her. I fell ill, and when I recovered, my mother closely questioned me of the tall lady, of whom, in the height of my fever, I had so often spoken.

I cannot tell you what a weight was taken from my boyish spirits when I learned that this was no apparition, but a most lovely woman; not young, though she had kept her young looks, for the grief which had broken her heart seemed to have spared her beauty.

When the rebel troops were retreating after their total defeat, in that very wood I was so fond of, a young officer, unable any longer to endure the anguish of his wounds, sunk from his horse, and laid himself down to die. He was found there by the daughter of Sir Henry R , and conveyed by a trusty domestic to her father's mansion. Sir Henry was a loyalist, but the officer's desperate condition excited his compassion, and his many wounds spoke a language a brave man could not misunderstand. Sir Henry's daughter, with many tears, pleaded for him, and pronounced that he should be carefully and secretly attended. And well she kept that promise, for she waited upon him (her mother being long dead) for many weeks, and anxiously watched for the first opening of eyes, that, languid as he was, looked brightly and gratefully upon his young nurse.

You may fancy better than I can tell you, as he slowly

recovered, all the moments that were spent in reading, and low-voiced singing, and gentle playing on the lute, and how many fresh flowers were brought to one whose wounded limbs would not bear him to gather them for himself, and how calmly the days glided on in the blessedness of returning health, and in that sweet silence so carefully enjoined him. I will pass by this to speak of one day, which, brighter and pleasanter than others, did not seem more bright or more lovely than the looks of the young maiden, as she gaily spoke of ‘a little festival which (though it must bear an unworthier name) she meant really to give in honour of her guest’s recovery.’ ‘And it is time, lady,’ said he, ‘for that guest so tended and honoured, to tell you his whole story, and speak to you of one who will help him to thank you ; may I ask you, fair lady, to write a little billet for me, which even in these times of danger I may find some means to forward ?’ To his mother, no doubt, she thought, as with light steps and a lighter heart she seated herself by his couch, and smilingly bade him dictate ; but when he said ‘My dear wife,’ and lifted up his eyes to be asked for more, he saw before him a pale statue, that gave him one look of utter despair, and fell for he had no power to help her heavily at his feet. Those eyes never truly reflected the pure soul again, or answered by answering looks the fond enquiries of her poor old father. She lived to be as I saw her, sweet and gentle, and delicate always, but reason returned no more. She visited till the day of her death the spot where she first saw that young soldier, and dressed herself in the very clothes that he said so well became her.

as if by a miracle, but when they had examined them, and observed that it was only a physician and his boy, their awe, or their surprise, disappeared, and they crowded round Iskander, some holding out their wrists, others lolling out their tongues, and some asking questions, which perplexed alike the skill and the modesty of the adventurous dealer in magical medicine. The annoyance, however, was not of great duration, for Kaffis so belaboured their fair shoulders with his official baton, that they instantly retreated with precipitation, uttering violent shrieks, and bestowing on the eunuch so many titles, that Iskander and his page were quite astounded at the intuitive knowledge which the imprisoned damsels possessed of that vocabulary of abuse, which is in general mastered only by the experience of active existence.

Quitting this chamber, the eunuch and his companions ascended a lofty staircase. They halted at length before a door. 'This is the chamber of the tower,' said their guide, 'and here we shall find the fair captive.' He knocked, the door was opened by a female slave, and Iskander and Nicæus, with an anxiety they could with difficulty conceal, were ushered into a small but sumptuous apartment. In the extremity was a recess covered with a light gauzy curtain. The eunuch bidding them keep in the background, advanced, and cautiously withdrawing the curtain slightly aside, addressed some words in a low voice to the inmate of the recess. In a few minutes the eunuch beckoned to Iskander to advance, and whispered to him. 'She would not at first see you, but I have told her you are a Christian, the more the pity, and she consents.' So saying, he withdrew the curtain, and exhibited a veiled female figure lying on a couch.

'Noble lady,' said the physician in Greek, which he had ascertained the eunuch did not comprehend, 'pardon the zeal of a Christian friend. Though habited in this garb, I have served under your illustrious sire. I should deem

my life well spent in serving the daughter of the great Hymniades.'

'Kind stranger,' replied the captive, 'I was ill prepared for such a meeting. I thank you for your sympathy, but my sad fortunes are beyond human aid.'

'God works by humble instruments, noble lady,' said Iskander, 'and with his blessing we may yet prosper'

'I fear that I must look to death as my only refuge,' replied Iduna, 'and still more, I fear that it is not so present a refuge as my oppressors themselves imagine. But you are a physician; tell me then how speedily Nature will make me free.'

She held forth her hand, which Iskander took and involuntarily pressed 'Noble lady,' he said, 'my skill is a mere pretence to enter these walls The only talisman I bear with me is a message from your friends.'

'Indeed!' said Iduna, in an agitated tone.

'Restrain yourself, noble lady,' said Iskander, interposing, 'restrain yourself. Were you any other but the daughter of Hymniades I would not have ventured upon this perilous exploit But I know that the Lady Iduna has inherited something more than the name of her great ancestors, their heroic soul If ever there were a moment in her life in which it behoved her to exert all her energies, that moment has arrived. The physician who addresses her, and his attendant who waits at hand, are two of the Lady Iduna's most devoted friends There is nothing that they will not hazard, to effect her delivery; and they have matured a plan of escape which they are sanguine must succeed Yet its completion will require, on her part, great anxiety of mind, greater exertion of body, danger, fatigue, privation Is the Lady Iduna prepared for all this endurance, and all this hazard?'

'Noble friend,' replied Iduna, 'for I cannot deem you a stranger, and none but a chivalric knight could have entered upon this almost forlorn adventure, you have not,